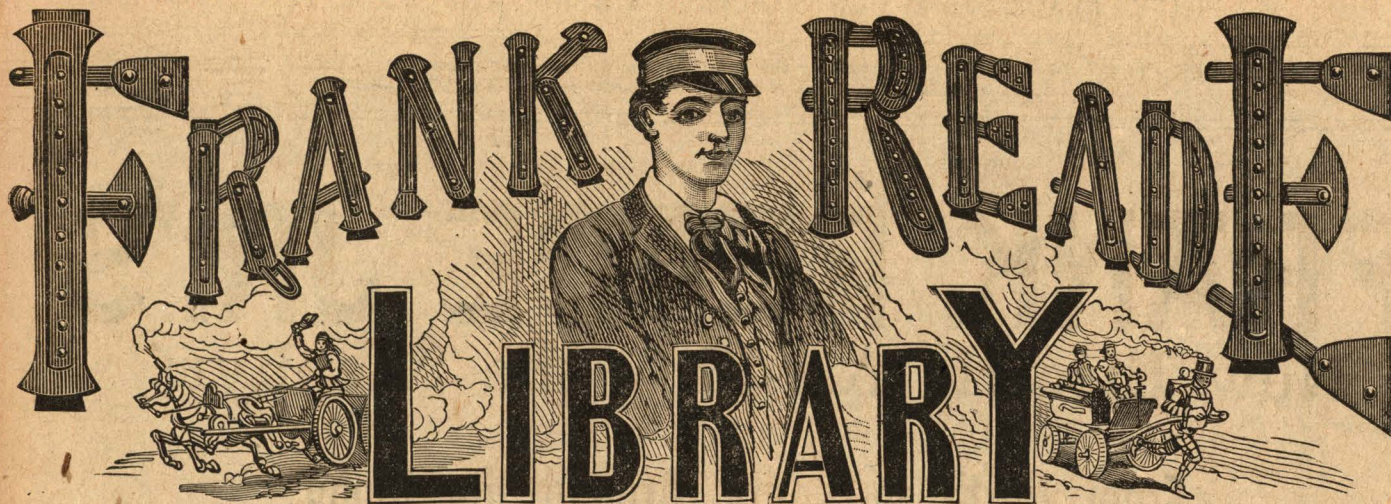


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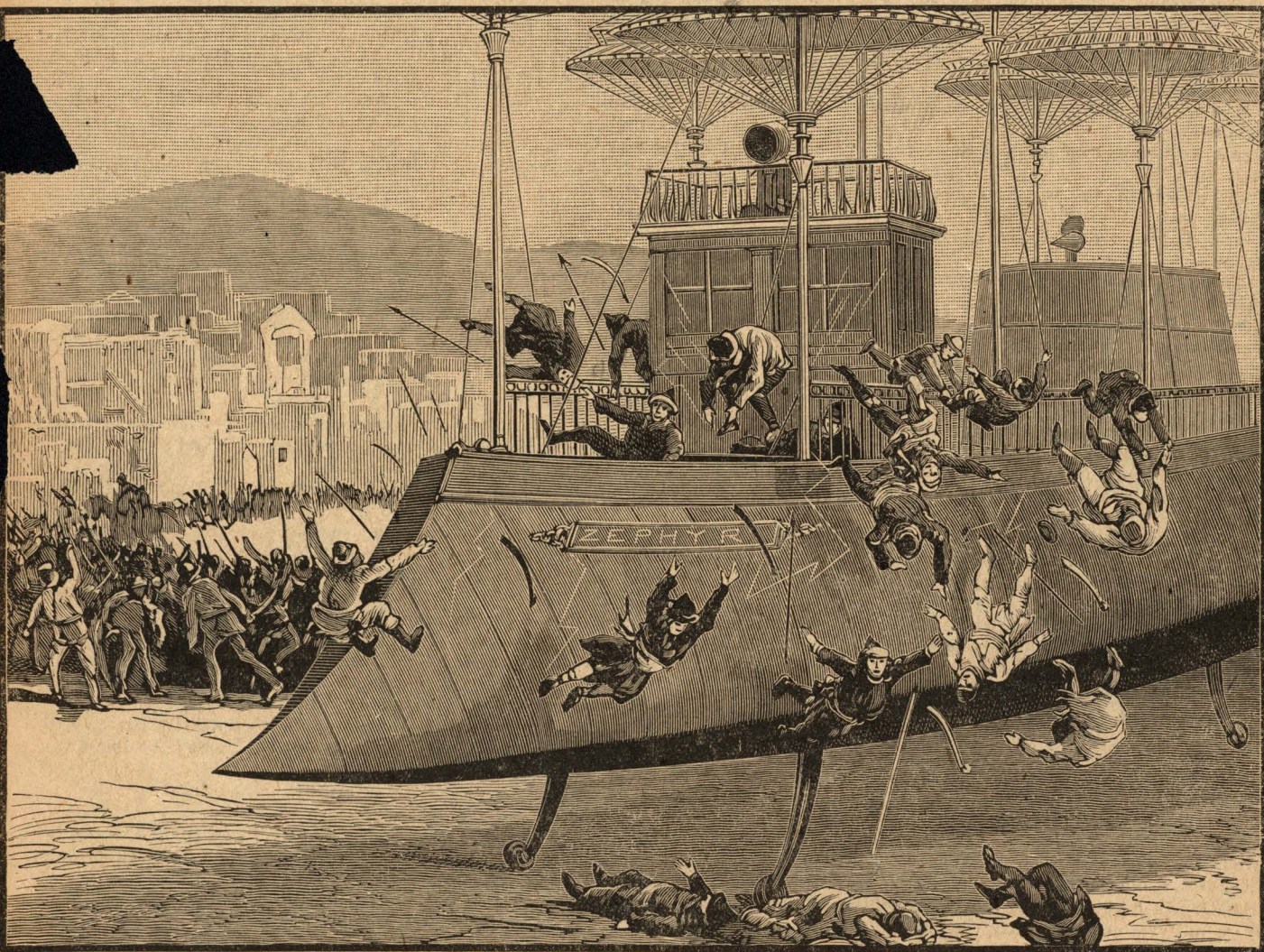
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Frank Reade, Jr.'s

New Electric Air-Ship the "Zephyr," or,
From North to South Around the Globe.

By "NONAME."

PART II.



Those who reached the rail were thrown over with such force that they were badly maimed, or suffered from a broken neck. It was a terrible experience for them. Frank kept the current on until he saw that the deck was cleared.

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New Electric Air-Ship the "Zephyr;"

OR,

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By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His Air-Ship in Asia; or, A Flight Across the Steppes," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESCUE OF BEATRICE.

THE scene beheld by those on board the air-ship was thrilling and one never to be forgotten.

In a clear space in the jungle and close to the mountain wall, were half a dozen horsemen.

They were clearly of the Thug tribe, and they had been driven there by the fire set by the Brahmins.

They were literally hemmed in by the roaring flames.

Every moment the fire was drawing nearer, and must very soon engulf them in its awful embrace. It was a horrible thing to contemplate, an awful death to suffer.

But what brought the loud cry of horror from the air-ship's crew was a startling fact.

The three Englishmen had with one accord recognized one of the Thugs. By his side, upon a milk-white horse, was a young girl, whose beautiful features looked white as marble in the light of the flames.

It was Beatrice Swelton, and her companion was the Thug, Nigra.

They were hemmed in by the flames, and it seemed a certainty that their fate was forever sealed.

Lord Swelton, as he recognized his beloved daughter, was beside himself with horror and anxiety. Frantically he rushed up and down the air-ship's deck.

"Beatrice, my dear child," he cried, wildly, "thank God you are alive, but heavens, what peril is yours! We must save her, friends! Shoot the villains by her side! I adjure you, in the name of God, to give aid to an afflicted father."

"She shall be saved!" cried young Montgomery, as he seized his rifle and pulled the trigger. Crack!

The weapon exploded, and one of the Thugs fell. Then it was that they saw the air-ship above them.

The effect upon the wretches was most remarkable. Instead of an aggressive stand, they instantly dropped from their horses and fell upon their knees.

With loud and frantic supplications they waved their arms wildly.

Of course not a word spoken by them was un-

derstood by our friends, but it was easy to see that they were begging them to save them from the flames.

Frank Reade, Jr., sprang forward and struck up Montgomery's rifle barrel.

"Desist!" he cried. "You must not take life needlessly. They are beaten."

"But it is subserving justice to kill them all," cried the young Englishman; "they are murderers of the worst type."

"Yet it is not fair to shoot a foe who has surrendered," said Frank, firmly; "their fate will soon be determined by the flames."

"That is right!" cried Sir Archie. "Don't fire on the wretches."

Montgomery lowered his rifle.

"But something must be done to save Beatrice!" he cried. "She must not be left to die in the flames also."

"Steady!" cried Frank. "Don't get excited. She shall be saved, if such a thing is possible."

Then he turned to Barney.

"Let the air-ship descend!" he cried, "but look out for the flames."

There was need of this, for the flames and smoke mounted high in the air, and had they come in contact with the air-ship much harm might have resulted.

Barney obeyed orders.

Down sank the air-ship until it was right over the spot where Beatrice and her captors were.

The fire was now raging madly in the jungle and rapidly drawing the line of death nearer. Great clouds of smoke at times hid the young girl from view.

"Oh, God, spare my child!" wailed the distracted father.

Beatrice, who had seen the air-ship, was making frantic signals to those on board. The brave girl seemed as calm and self-possessed as though not facing death.

Her expression had been one of utter amazement at first, viewing the air-ship.

But when she recognized her dear friends at the rail, she at once comprehended that the monster apparition high in air was some new invention of an enterprising American. While she viewed the air-ship with admiration she was not slow to understand its principle.

The Thugs with the cowardly Nigra foremost

were groveling in the dirt and calling for mercy.

It was patent to them that their only escape lay in throwing themselves upon the mercy of those aboard the air-ship.

With their native cunning and hypocrisy, they hoped to work upon the sympathies of the aerial travelers.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was not so foolish as to yield to any mistaken impulse of humanity.

Down settled the air-ship until within a safe distance as possible of the fire line beneath. Then Frank went to the rail.

He held in his hands a long, fire-proof rope of pliable steel. It was a very small but very strong line, and capable of sustaining great pressure.

Making a trumpet of his hands, Frank shouted:

"Beatrice, do you hear me?"

The girl's face turned upward.

"I do," she replied.

"I am going to save you provided you will follow my directions very carefully."

"I will do so."

"I shall lower this line. You must fasten it under your arms very securely. Then we will pull you aboard the air-ship. Have you the courage to do this?"

"I have."

"Very well. Be sure to fasten the rope very securely."

"All right, sir."

Frank lowered the line quickly. Down it went, and a coil of it fell upon the pommel of the saddle in which the girl sat.

Beatrice proved herself a girl of nerve. With a quick movement she passed the line under her arms and fastened it.

"Are you ready?" asked Frank.

"I am."

At this moment Nigra chanced to raise his eyes and see the move. In a moment he was upon his feet.

Like a panther he sprang forward with a sharp knife in his hand.

Fury and passion of the most awful kind marred the fellow's features. It was certain that moment might have been Beatrice's last but for an intervention.

Dick Montgomery had stood at the rail all this while with the rifle in his hands.

He had been itching to give the villain a shot and this was his chance.

It was to save Beatrice's life, and quick as a flash he threw the rifle to his shoulder.

Crack!

The bullet went true to the mark. Straight to the murderous Nigra's heart it went. The villain threw up his arms and fell.

It was fitting that he should end his career in this summary manner. In that moment India was rid of one of its vilest monsters.

The other Thugs did not desist in their groveling. With quick and ready hands the air-ship's crew pulled Beatrice aboard.

Over the rail she came safe and sound and was in her father's arms.

What a meeting that was. We will draw a veil over it for sufficient reasons and pass on to other incidents.

Barney pulled lever No. 11 open just in season to escape an upward burst of flame.

Up shot the air-ship. In a few moments it was speeding southward.

Nothing was ever known of the fate of the Thugs left within that flaming circle.

But it was safe to assume that they met fitting expiation for their awful crimes in the flames together with the body of the monster in crime, Nigra.

The quest for Beatrice Swelton was ended.

She had been restored at last safely to her doting father and her faithful lover. More happiness could not have fallen to their lot.

But all were prone to admit that had it not been for the opportune coming of Frank Reade, Jr., and the Zephyr, the rescue would never have been accomplished.

As a natural result their gratitude to the famous inventor knew no bounds.

He was overwhelmed with praise and thanks. Frank received all these manifestations modestly.

"How can we ever repay you?" cried Lord Swelton. "If it will recompense you my fortune and my title are yours."

"Sir, I am already rewarded in having righted a wrong," replied Frank, firmly. "Let the matter drop here."

Once more the air-ship went on her southward way, not quite half of her journey around the globe from north to south had been accomplished, but the most thrilling experiences were yet ahead.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

SOUTHWARD over India the Zephyr took her wonderful aerial flight.

It had all been arranged that the English party should disembark at Benares and go thence by rail to Calcutta, from whence a homeward steamer to England could be found.

Once in Benares they were far beyond the line of safety and no more danger need be apprehended.

To go to Calcutta would have been out of the way for the Zephyr.

Frank had decided to keep straight southward for Madras, and from thence to Ceylon.

They were now over the central part of Hindostan, and the country presented a different aspect.

The wild, barren regions of the upper states were superseded by the fertile valleys of the tributaries of the Ganges and other streams.

But it was a curious scene to the voyagers, which was spread out panorama like below them.

The hot Indian sun beat down upon the country with fearful intensity. The air-ship's deck, however, was a cool and comfortable place.

Awnings were so arranged as to shut off the rays of the sun, and beneath these the voyagers lounged.

A happier party was never seen, and there was good reason for this.

Lord Swelton was made happy in the knowledge of the restoration of his daughter. Beatrice, of course, was overjoyed at her escape from a horrible position, and everybody else was pleased that affairs had turned out so fortunately.

It seemed a rare treat, indeed, to enjoy this wonderful voyage through the air over tropical India.

There was much of interest to be seen in the country spread below.

Also the party lounged about the deck, told stories and indulged in the happiest of social converse.

There was never any lack of diversion.

When all else flagged, Barney brought out his fiddle and charmed his hearers with Irish melodies and jigs galore.

Pomp, not to be outdone, produced his banjo and plantation refrains and negro breakdowns done in rare style, were much appreciated.

Barney and Pomp were two incorrigible jokers and kept the company always in mirth and laughter and jolly spirits.

So matters went on very happily during that voyage to Benares.

"I tell you, Mr. Reade," said Sir Archibald once to the young inventor, "this sort of life is ideal. I could not wish for more certain realization of Paradise and its pleasures than to have this voyage last forever."

"Indeed!" said Frank, with pleasure. "Then you enjoy life aboard the air-ship?"

"I do."

"I am glad of that. If, however, you had traveled in this manner as much as I have, it might not seem so much of a novelty, at least."

"I could never tire of it," declared the nobleman. "It is the very quintessence of enjoyment to me. I wish that you might be induced to sell your air-ship, Mr. Reade. I will give you half my estate for it."

Frank smiled as he replied:

"That I cannot do, sir. The air-ship is my own invention, and I will never part with it."

But all things must have an end, and as the days passed the Zephyr drew hourly nearer to Benares.

This would mean a leave taking of the air-ship, and this the passengers were bound to deeply regret.

One day the Zephyr was passing over a deep valley among the mountains when Barney, who was in the bow, espied a wonderful city far below.

Its buildings seemed to be of the whitest marble, and its streets were broad and well paved.

Throngs of native Hindoos could be seen in the public squares, upon the streets, in windows of houses, and even upon the housetops, where vast gardens of luxuriant plants were to be seen.

Indeed the entire city could be seen with wonderful distinctness, and entirely from the air-ship's deck.

As a result everybody crowded to the rail to view the wonderful spectacle.

"Is it not a grand sight?" cried Sir Archie, enthusiastically.

"You are right," agreed Lord Swelton. "Who would fancy a people of such intelligent sort in this out of the way corner of this mighty world?"

"It looks like a fabled city of the East," said Beatrice. "Babylon in its glory may once have looked like that."

"What do you think of it, Mr. Reade?" cried Montgomery. "Are these people distinctly of the Hindoo race?"

"I should say that they were," replied Frank, quietly.

"But I always supposed that the Hindoos built their houses of bamboo, and that they never essayed a house of stone."

"That is a wrong impression," replied Frank. "The Hindoos are by no means a benighted people, save, perhaps, in the matter of religion. Even then they have many beautiful and forceful theories, for the most of them are followers of Buddha."

"Certainly this branch of the race have built a beautiful city here," ventured Sir Archie.

"You are right. No doubt this little principality is independent and owes no allegiance to any other power."

"England has not as yet put her claiming hand upon it."

"Exactly. It is a small principality without doubt, and the native ruler is a man of judgment and good information, you may depend upon it."

"I agree with you. Really would it not be fine to pay him a visit?"

Frank shook his head slowly.

"I fear that it would be hardly safe," he declared; "these petty rulers are despots frequently. He might take a notion that he wanted the air-ship for a bauble."

"That is true!" agreed Dr. Vaneyke. "Yet it would be a rare opportunity to study the habits and dress of these people."

Frank saw that the scientist was anxious to descend.

At first it had seemed to him like a bit of foolhardiness.

But now the more he thought of it the more convinced he became that it was not impracticable and that it could be done safely.

Accordingly after some thought Frank finally decided to descend to a point within one hundred yards of the housetops and first make the acquaintance of the people.

They might be friendly, and if so all would work well. Of course there was more or less risk to run.

Accordingly Frank imparted his plans to Barney. The Celt readily embraced them and proceeded to act accordingly.

The Zephyr was allowed to sink until at the proper height.

Then she floated above the housetops like a big bird. The result was wonderful to witness.

The whole Hindoo city was all alive with excitement, and vast crowds of people surged into the public square to get a look at the leviathan in the air.

Of course the Zephyr was a mighty mystery to them.

The more ignorant were inclined to be superstitious and view the air-ship as an apparition, and its visit of evil omen.

But fortunately the majority of the Hindoos looked upon the Zephyr in the true light.

Regarding it as some wonderful vehicle used by a foreign prince in his travels, they viewed it with wonder and admiration.

While they could not understand its principles of aerial elevation, they were not above be-

lieving it a possibility and nothing of the supernatural sort, at any rate.

The Zephyr hung suspended about three hundred feet over the public square.

Great crowds of native people surged below. Suddenly these gave way, and a guard of soldiers, with showy uniforms and gleaming sabers, dashed into the square.

In a twinkling the people were driven back and the soldiers made a cordon about the square.

Then into this open space there suddenly dashed a dozen liveried men, carrying a palanquin of gorgeous sort.

In the palanquin there was a young and richly-dressed man. He was treated with the utmost deference, and as the palanquin stopped he sprang out and waved his arms.

In an instant silence fell upon the vast crowd. It was evident that they had been well trained to obey.

The voyagers of the Zephyr saw at once that he was a dignitary, no doubt the prince or chief ruler of the province.

Now that quiet was gained, the Hindoo ruler turned his gaze upward, and regarded the air-ship wonderingly. Frank Reade, Jr., saw this, and went at once to the rail.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT BHINDPORE.

THE famous inventor had not the slightest idea that any words he might speak would be understood by the Hindoo ruler.

However, he was resolved to chance it, so he leaned far over the rail and shouted:

"A pleasant greeting to your excellency. I am glad to meet you."

The Hindoo prince smiled, waved his hand in a pleasant and re-assuring manner, and in the best of English replied:

"The same to you, sir. Will you not descend and partake of a decanter of Indian wine?"

Frank nearly tumbled down in a heap, so astounded was he.

"Great guns!" he gasped. "Did you hear that, friends? He speaks English."

The Hindoo prince laughed, for he had heard Frank's *sotto voce*.

"Yes, I speak English!" he cried. "Also I am your friend. Pray descend and accept of my hospitality."

For a moment Frank was utterly at a loss what to say or do.

Finally recovering, he managed to lean over the rail and blurt forth:

"I say! In the name of conscience, who are you?"

The prince laughed again.

"I am Kosh, prince of this city of Bhindpore!" he replied. "I am a Hindoo, and, I trust, a devout follower of Buddha."

"But—where did you learn to speak English?" gasped Frank.

"Oh, that is easy enough. I learned that while in Calcutta, some years ago," replied Prince Kosh. "My father, who was then ruler of this province, sent me there to learn the arts. I became well acquainted with the English people there."

At once all on board the Zephyr became deeply interested. The Englishmen were at once eager to descend and accept the hospitality of Prince Kosh.

Even Barney and Pomp were as desirous of the same, and Dr. Vaneyke prevailed upon Frank to let the Zephyr go down.

Some further colloquy ensued between Frank and the prince, and then the young inventor told Barney to lower the air-ship.

The Zephyr settled down like a monster bird in the center of the public square.

The people cheered, the native guards fired a salute, and Prince Kosh met Frank at the gangway with a hearty handshake.

"I welcome you to Bhindpore," he cried, genially, "and you shall make yourself master of everything while you are here."

"Ah, I thank you, prince," replied Frank, deferentially, "but we can remain with you but a short time. We have a long journey to make."

The prince seemed disappointed.

He expressed his regrets, and then regarding the Zephyr curiously, he said:

"I have heard of you Americans as wizards in the art of invention. I have heard of the steam railroad, but I have never before heard of the flying palace in the air."

"It is not a palace," said Frank, with a smile. "It is simply a ship of the air."

"It is wonderful beyond description," cried the prince, "but how do you manage to make it float?"

A score of questions were put by the prince, and Frank answered them all pleasantly.

Then the young inventor took Prince Kosh aboard the Zephyr, and, in a few minutes, had carried him to an altitude from which the earth could not be seen for fleecy clouds.

In spite of wonderful nerve and cool courage, the native prince turned pale as he reflected that he was so far from the earth.

But the air-ship presently began to descend, and soon was in sight of the earth.

Then Prince Kosh looked down upon the city and the country about.

His spirits now arose and he became wild with excitement and interest.

"Wonderful!" he cried, eagerly. "I have never seen the equal of this. It is grand."

When the Zephyr, after an absence of scarcely fifteen minutes, once more settled down into the center of the public square, the native people gave way to their enthusiasm in wild cheers.

They greeted the safe return of their prince with great joy. They would have surged into the square but for the cordon of police.

Prince Kosh was highly pleased with the entertainment he had received.

When Frank told him of their experience with the Thugs, and that the monster Nigra had been killed, his joy was beyond bounds.

"Good for you!" he cried, eagerly. "Why, that miscreant has been the terror of India. Do you know that he once swore black revenge upon me, and but for my faithful guardsmen I would one night have suffered death from the garrote? It is a great joy to know that he is dead."

Then the prince swept his hand in the direction of the fine buildings and continued:

"I am master here, and I do not mean to be a tyrant. My people are faithful subjects. They are happy and well treated. But my tribe is a small one. I have not over three thousand fighting men. Over yonder range of mountains are the Kurghids—a strong and barbarous tribe, who have sworn our extermination simply because we are prosperous and not robbers like them. I live in hourly dread of an attack from them."

Frank was interested.

"Can you not whip them?" he asked.

"Ah! I fear not. They outnumber us fully four to one. Moreover, my people are tillers of the soil and not fighters."

"Indeed!" said Frank, sincerely. "I trust you may have no trouble with them."

"I live in hourly dread of it."

The prince now turned his attention to the entertainment of his distinguished visitors.

He cordially invited them to his palace. But Frank was anxious to at once be on the go.

However, the prince did prevail upon them to wait and view an exhibition of snake charming and juggling given in the public square.

In a jiffy divans were brought, rugs were spread upon the stone paving, and a line of soldiers formed about a sort of throne upon which Prince Kosh sat.

Frank Reade, Jr., had a seat by his side as a special mark of honor.

And now the crowd opened and the snake charmers appeared.

The fantastically attired natives, attended by a dervish with a reed pipe, which he played in a melodious manner, advanced.

A cage containing several specimens of the deadly cobra were produced and then the exhibition began.

Under the influence of the music the snakes were fondled and handled by the charmers in the most careless fashion.

It was a most remarkable exhibition, and the Zephyr's passengers watched it with interest.

After it had terminated the jugglers appeared. All were looking forward to this with eagerness.

But before they could begin a terrible cry went through the crowd which brought Prince Kosh from his seat with terror and mad anxiety.

"The Kurghids are coming! They have carried the gates!"

At the same moment the distant crash of firearms could be heard, and a scene of confusion indescribable ensued.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ATTACK OF THE KURGHIDS.

It was an appalling report to the faithful tribe of Prince Kosh that the barbarous Kurghids had forced the gates of the city and were upon them with full intent to exterminate them.

In an instant the whole square was a scene of confusion.

Not even the trumpet orders of Prince Kosh could restore order. He turned with horror and despair to Frank.

"Oh, Mr. Reade," he cried, "what am I to do?"

Frank's sympathies were at once aroused. His eyes flashed and he drew a deep breath.

"Have courage," he said, with great calmness. "I think I can help you."

But Prince Kosh looked doubtful and his manner became frantic.

He threw off his bejeweled mantle and grasped his sword. His manner was fierce and desperate as he sprang down the steps from his throne.

"We will give the dogs a good fight," he cried, bravely. "If Kurghid defeats us to-day it will be a costly victory."

Into the midst of his soldiers Prince Kosh rushed.

He showed that he was a commander as well as a prince, and the manner in which he found his troops and brought order out of chaos was masterly indeed.

In a few moments the Indian troops were formed in a solid square. The people had all fled to a safer part of the city.

The Kurghids had stolen upon the city cautiously, and at an opportune moment had overpowered the guards at the gates.

They were now swarming into the city like ravenous wolves.

Savage, barbarious looking natives they were, yet armed with the European rifle and fairly well disciplined.

They were a hard foe for the Hindoos to face, as they were savage fighters and far superior in numbers.

But though they invaded the city with the conviction that victory was within their grasp, they were destined to be much deceived.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw the very desperation of the exigency and was quick to act.

He sprang to the gangway of the Zephyr and was quickly on deck.

The others of the crew followed.

"What a horrible thing!" cried Sir Archibald. "These fierce savages will wipe out this peaceful and intelligent tribe of Hindoos."

"My soul! something ought to be done to help them!" cried Lord Swelton.

Beatrice was wringing her small white hands in dread anxiety, and Montgomery was trying to quiet her.

Dr. Vaneyke was assisting Frank in certain operations, while Barney and Pomp were at work in the pilot-house.

Suddenly Frank cried:

"Up with the air-ship! let her go up quickly, Barney."

"All roight, sor!" cried the Celt.

The next moment the air-ship sprang into space.

Up it went for a thousand feet and there hung suspended.

All looked down now and saw a thrilling sight. The Kurghids had met the soldiers of Prince Kosh in the streets and a desperate battle was in progress.

"My soul!" cried Sir Archibald, "would you see how these barbarians are mowing down the men of Prince Kosh. Cannot something be done? Oh, if we could only give them a volley."

"Why not?" cried Lord Swelton, as he picked up his rifle. "Let every one take a gun and we can bother them much."

"I'm with you!" cried Dick Montgomery, and even Beatrice looked eager to join the fray.

But at this moment Dr. Vaneyke appeared at the rail with half a dozen of the deadly electric bombs.

He would have dropped one of them over the rail, but Frank Reade, Jr., interfered.

"That will not be safe," he cried. "I have a better plan."

"What is it?" asked the doctor.

"Wait, and you will see."

Frank had produced a tremendous long coil of wire and this he now threw over the rail.

Down it went, unrolling as it went. When it struck the ground it was in the rear of the Kurghid forces.

It was so small that they did not notice its presence.

One end of the wire lay upon the ground. The other end was attached to a peculiarly powerful battery, an invention of Frank Reade, Jr.'s, and Frank held the switch lever which was to turn on the current.

He waited until the wire struck the ground. Frank had on gloves of rubber which was a sufficient insulator, and enabled him to handle the wire.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Reade?" asked Lord Swelton; "do you expect to anchor the boat with that little wire?"

"Not exactly!" said Frank, with a smile, "but I beg of you for your own sake not to touch that wire."

"Ah, is it charged?"

"Well, just a trifle. Watch the effect and you will see."

Frank swung the wire directly over the heads of the Kurghid forces. Then he suddenly pressed the lever.

In an instant the wire was alive with a powerful current.

Vivid lightning flashes shot from the end of it.

Down among the barbarians fell that live wire. Wherever it struck death and confusion went.

It overthrew men and horses, and literally mowed a swath through the ranks of the barbarians.

They were piled up in heaps, and consternation seized them.

They saw only the darting, death-dealing lightning in their midst, and could not understand it.

Wherever the wire struck it carried death with it, and proved a terrible destroyer. The result was most terrible to witness, as well as for the stricken foe.

They could not combat such a powerful antagonist.

Blows availed nothing against it. Rifle shots were useless, and yet still in their midst played that deadly wire.

There were fully six thousand men in the Kurghid army, but only a part of this force had entered the city.

For a time the barbarians tried to locate and combat their terrible foe. But the destroyer kept right after them.

Down through them, and right into the front rank went the mysterious destroyer. It was quite useless for the Kurghids to stand before it.

Their front rank was broken, and the Hindoos with loud and victorious cheers pressed in upon them.

The Kurghids were driven into an utter rout and breaking into wildest confusion, were driven down the city streets.

Frank now drew in the wire, for he reflected that it might do as much harm now to friend as foe.

The Hindoos were valiantly doing their part. They were driving the routed Kurghids like sheep out of the city gates.

But outside of the city there were in waiting reinforcements. These were now pressing forward to stem the tide of battle and check the defeat.

Frank saw this.

He saw that he was far enough from the city walls to do no damage. He now picked up one of the electric bombs.

Holding one over the rail, he let it drop.

It fell directly in the path of the reinforcing party. The result was amazing as well as terrifying.

The bomb struck the earth and exploded with terrific force.

A perfect mound of earth and debris was raised directly in front of the advancing barbarians.

They paused in utter astonishment at this wonderful demonstration of giant force.

They regarded the air-ship with something like superstitious terror. Then they started to go around the mound.

Frank saw that something desperate must be done.

If the reinforcements reached the city gates the fate of the Kurghids pursued by the Hindoos would be averted.

It was imperatively necessary to check them, and there was but one way to do it.

Frank took this way.

He picked up another bomb and hurled it directly into their midst. The effect was frightful to witness.

Dozens of the savage warriors were torn to pieces, and another mound was raised. Truly the electric bombs were fearful instruments of death.

The Kurghid forces, with this fearful repulse, turned and broke into a confused and disorderly retreat. It was a thrilling sight.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON TO CEYLON.

THE terror of the Kurghid warriors was fearful to witness. They ran as if pursued by demons.

If they could have fought the peaceful Hindoos without the operation of the air-ship, they would no doubt have come off victors.

But with this powerful ally, against whom they could seem to do nothing, they were really not in it. They sought safety in precipitate flight.

It was impressed upon their superstitious souls, that a foe possessed of the marvelous gift of floating in mid-air, must be possessed of supernatural qualities. In that case they could not hope to fight against it.

Frank followed them with the bombs for some way.

Then he left the defeated foe to the tender mercies of the pursuing Hindoo soldiers, who were disposed to give no quarter.

It was a defeat from which the Kurghids were not to recover.

From that day their power was broken. Never after did they successfully venture to attack the Hindoos.

The air-ship now took leave of Prince Kosh and his city.

The prince was deeply affected, and begged his visitors to sojourn a while longer. But they declined gratefully, and soon the air-ship was once more on its way to Benares.

When, several days later, the city came in view, it was early morning, and all were on deck.

The appearance of the air-ship over the Indian metropolis caused a sensation.

Vast multitudes of people instantly assembled, and Frank could see that they were much excited.

The young inventor was too shrewd to descend into their midst.

"I will wait," he said, philosophically. "It is better to go slow and safe."

"But how are we to land?" asked Lord Swelton, somewhat anxiously.

"Have no fear as to that," replied Frank, with a smile. "I will see to it that you get down all safely."

The air-ship hung over the city for some while. Then an idea struck Frank.

He selected one of the largest and highest buildings, and allowed the air-ship to descend and rest upon the flat roof.

This was like many others, a sort of aerial garden, with palms and beds of plants, and even a fountain playing. Here the air-ship rested.

Of course a great rush was made by the excited populace to gain the roof. Several Hindoo gentlemen and ladies were beneath an awning, and they retreated in dismay as the Zephyr, so like a huge bird, settled down so near them.

At a respectful distance they viewed the air-ship with wonder.

The Englishmen were all at the rail, ready to descend.

"I think we had better make our leave taking brief," declared Frank. "I fear that if the mob gets up here in their excitement they will do the ship harm."

"You are right, Mr. Reade," cried Sir Archibald. "We will be all right. You may leave us right here."

"Then you will be all safe?"

"Oh, yes. I am familiar with the city of Benares and will find plenty of my own people. I am even acquainted with the native owners of this house."

With this Sir Archie addressed the Hindoo gentlemen in their tongue. They answered at once with ready recognition, and came forward readily to welcome him.

Frank saw that his passengers would be all safe.

So he shook hands in parting with Lord Swelton, Sir Archie and Dick, and Beatrice too.

"We shall never forget the service you have done us, Mr. Reade," she said, with one of her sweetest smiles.

The crew of the Zephyr all were at the rail, and farewells were quickly spoken.

Then the leave taking came. Pomp opened lever No. 11, and the Zephyr shot upward a thousand feet.

For a moment the air-ship hung over the city and then begun its southern flight.

Their experiences with Lord Swelton and his party were at an end. But they would never forget them or their thrilling adventures with the Thugs.

"Golly sakes, but I jes' kinder cattedored to dem chaps," said Pomp, as he jingled a few golden sovereigns in his pocket. "Dey was jes' de bes' Englishers I ever seed."

"Bejabers, av' all England was loike thim, ould Ireland wud soon be free," said Barney.

"They were gentlemen, of discretion and good sense," said Dr. Vaneyke. "I am proud that we were able to be of service to them."

Frank Reade, Jr., had gone into the cabin to consult his chart.

Dr. Vaneyke joined him there.

"Are we getting near the end of the peninsula?" asked the scientist.

"We shall soon sight the Santpoar Mountains," declared Frank. "From thence we will fly southward until over Madras. Thence over the lower spur of the Ghauts range, and across the Gulf of Manaar to Ceylon."

"Good!" cried the scientist. "I would beg some little time in Ceylon for botanical research."

"You shall have it," replied Frank.

The Zephyr kept southward day after day.

A vast territory was passed over. The Santpoar range of mountains was left behind, and the air-ship floated over the province of Madras.

A strange, wild and broken country was seen below. The weather proved of the finest, though a trifle warm, and on the whole little occurred to mar the pleasure of the trip.

Finally the Zephyr reached Cape Comorin, and then proceeded eastward across the Gulf of Manaar towards Colombo.

This part of the island of Ceylon was not stopped at, however, the air-ship keeping on into the interior, for the purpose of giving Dr. Vaneyke a chance for botanical research.

And now vast jungles, such as had not been equalled in India proper, were encountered.

Native settlements and plantations of coffee and rice were interspersed here and there.

At length the air-ship reached an open tract of country at the base of a range of mountains.

Here the air-ship descended, the doctor hav-

ing decided that this was a suitable spot for his work.

Armed with his trowel and other instruments, Dr. Vaneyke left the air-ship.

It was a lonely place, and no sign of habitation was to be seen anywhere about. The mountain slope, however, was rich in rare plants, and the doctor was in his glory.

He enthusiastically pursued his quest, finding a new *rara avis* at almost every step.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "Surely there is no part of the earth richer in specimens. I am a lucky man to be able to carry away so many."

Thus he enthusiastically wandered about the vicinity.

Barney and Pomp were busy shining the bright work of the Zephyr.

Frank Reade, Jr., had been busy studying his charts, when a thrilling incident occurred.

The doctor came to the spot in the mountain side where there was a cluster of beautiful flowers.

In his eagerness he never once thought of possible danger, and did not see a pair of bead-like eyes deep among the green leaves.

He put his hand boldly among the leaves. The next moment he experienced a shock which nigh took away his senses.

A deadly cobra had struck him full force. With a sharp cry the scientist reeled back.

Well he knew the meaning of this. The fact that death, swift, sure and speedy was overtaking him, for a moment dazed him.

"Oh, God!" he cried. "I have got my death. Help! Help!"

Frank Reade, Jr., heard his cry first, and came rushing to the rail.

"What is the matter, doctor?" he cried.

"God help me! I have been struck by a cobra!"

"My God! That is awful!"

Barney and Pomp heard the dread announcement with fearful dismay. The Celt shivered and wailed:

"Och, hone, the dear docther is done for this toime for sure."

"Massy sakes, but it am drefful!" cried Pomp, wildly. "Somefin' mus' be done fo' him."

"Begorra, phwat can it be?" cried Barney, despairingly. "Shure them koind av snakes is fearful deadly."

But Frank had made quick action. He had rushed to the cabin and now appeared with a bottle of whisky.

He knew that this was a powerful antidote for rattlesnake bites. It might act the same with the poison of the cobra.

At least it seemed the *dernier ressort* for the moment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PRINCE GULAH.

THE bite which the doctor had received from the cobra was fortunately not in a part immediately connected with an artery or big vein.

Yet the deadly virus might prove fatal, nevertheless.

For a moment the brave old man was giddy and faint with the prescience of certain death.

Then courage came to him and he partly regained his composure.

The next moment Frank Reade, Jr., was by his side.

"Good God, doctor!" cried the young inventor. "don't give up hope. Take this whisky. It will save you."

But the scientist shook his head.

"No," he cried. "Whisky has no effect upon the cobra."

"It does not?"

"No."

Frank was horror-struck.

"Then what can be done?" he cried with agony.

"Local absorption is the only means of curing the bite of the cobra."

"Perhaps suction would do it?"

"Yes."

"Then here goes."

Without a moment's hesitation Frank would have applied his lips to the wound, even at the risk of his own life.

But a rustling was heard in the bushes near and a musical voice said:

"Wait, sahib! I will save you. Have no fear."

The next moment the speaker stood before them. He was a slender, lithe Hindoo, with handsome features and great grace of movement.

He spoke English fluently, and had the appearance of a man of refinement and culture in the native way.

His appearance was a surprise to Frank and the doctor.

But in an instant a ray of hope shot through the breast of the young inventor.

He knew that the natives were often possessed of the secret of a cure for the bite of the cobra.

A spasmodic hope seized him that the doctor might be saved after all.

"I am Gulah, the healer," said the Hindoo, with a re-assuring smile, as he sprang forward and seized the doctor's wrist. "Ah! the fangs have not struck deep. You will be easily saved, sahib."

"What!" gasped the doctor, "then you think you can save my life?"

"I do."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Frank, joyfully. "You shall be rewarded, sir."

The native smiled, showing a beautiful row of teeth.

"If I had met you in another place, sahib, I could not have done it," he said, in his pleasant way, "but you see? It is here!"

As he spoke Gulah reached down and plucked the leaves of a strange-looking plant at their feet.

With a quick movement he bruised them between his hands and then spat upon them.

The leaves thus bruised and wet he clapped in a profuse quantity upon the wound.

They were bound tightly over the fang marks. The hand was rapidly swelling and the doctor's complexion was turning livid.

There was no time to lose.

The poison was beginning to work upon the system. It would be but a question of an hour at the furthest, unless its course was arrested.

Gulah, the native, looked into the doctor's face and said peremptorily:

"Lie down!"

The scientist obeyed. Indeed, his tottering legs would have soon compelled him to, in any case.

"Get hot water quick!" commanded the Hindoo healer. "Bring fire quick, sahibs! Lose no time!"

As luck had it, Pomp had hot water in his kettle on the stove in the galley of the air-ship.

A kettle of it was brought post haste.

Sticks were collected and a fire was going in a jiffy.

The doctor was now moaning in delirium.

All were excited, even Frank Reade, Jr., except the native, Gulah.

He was calm and collected through all, and worked with dispatch and wonderful skill.

In what seemed like no time at all he had brewed a cup from the steeped leaves of the curious plant.

This liquid he poured down the throat of the bitten man.

The effect was almost instantaneous and wonderful to look upon.

As if by magic the straightened muscles relaxed, the groaning ceased, the color began to come back into the wounded man's face.

At the same moment the puffed swelling in the wounded hand began to abate.

The doctor opened his eyes and sighed with relief.

"My God! how I have suffered!" he whispered; "but I am saved. I feel that the poison is being counteracted."

"Ay, sahib!" said the Hindoo healer, with a smile. "Gulah has saved you. The poison is out—see?"

The Hindoo now began to press the swelling about the wound.

Great drops of virus were forced out of this and fell upon the ground. The fellow persisted in this treatment until the hand was reduced to its normal size.

Then he bound some more of the juicy leaves over the wound.

"Keep them there for one day," he directed.

"Pretty quick you may get up and walk again."

"Right!" cried the doctor. "I feel my strength coming back."

Frank pressed forward and seized the Hindoo healer's hand.

"Gulah," he said, warmly, "you have saved the life of my dearest friend. How shall I ever repay you?"

"I ask no pay, sahib," replied the native healer, modestly. "Gulah has money enough. He is a prince among his people. He was hunting the tiger when he saw the wonderful floating palace descend, and he came to see it and the wonderful people who were in it. But you are English, sahib?"

"No," replied Frank. "We are not English. We are Americans."

"Say you so?" cried the native prince with sparkling eyes. "I have heard much of your people. They are wonderful in the arts."

"I am proud of my people," replied Frank, modestly.

"You have reason to be, sahib. But wait, and you shall partake of the hospitality of Gulah."

The native prince blew a shrill whistle. It was answered from a point in the jungle, and quickly a score of native hunters appeared.

As Gulah had said, he had been hunting the tiger, and had come up just at an opportune moment.

It required but a few moments to make a pleasant acquaintance with Gulah. Dr. Van-eyke quickly recovered, and then courtesies were exchanged.

The native prince was invited aboard the Zephyr, and Frank even gave him a trip up in the air.

Gulah was immensely pleased and carried away with the wonderful air-ship.

"It's wonderful, sahib!" he declared. "But if you wish to do me a favor you are in a position to do it."

"Of course I will," replied Frank, readily.

A peculiar change had come over Gulah's features. He waved his hand toward the cabin.

"Let us sit down in private, sahib," he said.

"It is a matter of great importance, I promise you."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PRINCE GULAH'S STORY.

FRANK at once led the way into the cabin. He motioned Prince Gulah to a seat.

"We shall be retired here," he said. "What have you to say?"

The native prince ignored the chair and seated himself Hindoo fashion upon a small footstool with his legs crossed.

There was an inscrutable expression upon his face, and he deliberated for some moments before speaking.

"Sahib will pardon me," he said finally, in a very courteous manner, "if I presume to ask of him a favor which he can grant, and I know of no other living person who can grant it."

"Name that favor," said Frank, earnestly. "No matter what it is, it shall be yours."

"First I shall have to tell you a story," said the prince, slowly. "When I was quite young, as is the custom of my people, my troth was pledged to a young princess. Sometimes people who are married in this manner never learn to love each other, and many unhappy marriages follow.

"Your people are more fortunate in this respect as caste is not a part of your Christian religion."

"But in this case the Princess Nida and myself were always in love with each other. We were to have married a fortnight since, but Nadja Pimjaub, my nephew, also was madly in love with Nida and swore that she would not be mine.

"He tried to bribe our priests to break the bond which tied us. Failing in that as the bond of caste would not permit it he vowed to break up our happiness even though it cost him his life.

"Sahib, do you see yonder long range of hills? Beyond them is the terrible Black Jungle. It is a dense tract which is alive with cobras, and no man's life is safe there.

"It is certain death to invade that fearful tract. Not a step can be taken that a snake will not strike you from the deep grass.

"Were it not for that mighty breeding ground it is said that the cobra di capello could be exterminated from the island of Ceylon.

"But they can breed faster in the jungle than they can be destroyed outside, and no man's life is safe in the vicinity of the Black Jungle.

"But Nadja Pimjaub secured some great spell from a wizard, and this enables him to go with impunity among the deadly reptiles. Having done this, Nadja invaded the home of Nida's parents and stole her bodily away.

"It is believed that he has taken her to the heart of the Black Jungle, and that he will hold her there until the priests consent to break the decree which binds her to me. Do you understand?"

"I do," replied Frank, who was deeply interested.

"None of our people dare invade the Black Jungle, and Nadja is safe. But with your air-ship you could do it."

As the prince concluded his thrilling tale Frank Reade, Jr., said eagerly:

"My dear prince, nothing in the world would give me greater pleasure than to carry out your desires in this matter."

"Then you will help me to recover Nida?" he asked, eagerly.

"I will."

The Hindoo bent down and pressed his lips to Frank's feet. Then he sprang up with eagerness and cried:

"We will go now if you will, Sahib!"

"Yes!" agreed Frank, "there is no need of wasting time."

But Prince Gulah paused.

"Wait, Sahib," he said, slowly, "I would ask yet another favor."

"Name it."

"May I go with you in this floating palace in the air?"

"Of course," replied Frank, readily. "I cannot very well take your men—"

"My men will remain where they are," said the prince, decisively.

Frank at once went out on deck and communicated to the others his purpose. Everybody was highly in favor of the move.

Prince Gulah gave orders to his attendants to await his return. Then Frank made a motion to Pomp in the pilot-house, and the Zephyr sprang into the air.

Instinctively Prince Gulah sprang up with alarm as he saw the earth leaving him.

But he soon recovered himself. It was a new sensation and of course did not fail to have its influence upon him. But he was a fellow of great pluck and soon composed himself.

He appeared to greatly enjoy the sail as the Zephyr soared above the high mountain ranges, and soon the vast expanse of the Black Jungle was spread out to view.

The jungle looked vastly different from this elevation than it did from the level ground.

As far as the eye could reach there was presented an unbroken expanse of dense grass and cane growth so thick as to be almost absolutely impenetrable.

In the center of this was a deep morass, and a small lake with an island in the center.

Even as the air-ship sailed above the jungle, the quick gaze of Prince Gulah caught an object below, and he cried:

"Ha, do you see a boat upon the water, sahib?" he cried. "Is it not so?"

Frank saw a small coracle upon the waters of the lake. He raised his glass to his eyes and studied it.

"You are right," he cried. "It is a canoe, or some craft of the kind."

Gulah had risen and stood with his hands gripping the rail. Great veins stood out upon his forehead.

"Very likely it is Nadja!" he said, tersely. "Ah! to meet him face to face!"

Instinctively his hand went to the hilt of a jeweled dagger in his belt. The fierce passion of the Hindoo temperament was in his face.

The air-ship now began to settle down closer to the waters of the lake.

The occupant of the lake saw it coming, and in great fright started for the shore. As the coracle was not far from it at the moment the shore was reached, and boat and man disappeared.

The air-ship settled down over the lake's surface, being scarcely twenty feet above the water.

In this manner it sailed to the spot where the coracle had disappeared.

There was the boat upon a strip of sandy beach scarce ten feet wide. Beyond this was a path leading into the jungle.

But the dense foliage covered the path, and it was impossible to follow it with the eye.

Frank saw at once that this was impracticable. His only method was to follow the path on foot.

This fact he conveyed to Prince Gulah. The Hindoo was not displeased, and said eagerly:

"Very well, so let it be. But what of cobra di capello? We may get struck at any moment. But I am ready to take the chance with you."

"I have the means to successfully overcome that peril," said Frank, readily. "We will not worry about that."

Gulah looked puzzled.

"But there is no sure cure for the cobra's bite if it strikes an artery," he declared.

"Have no fear," said Frank, positively. "I will arrange that matter."

"Gulah will say no more. He has confidence in sahib."

Frank directed Pomp, who was in the pilot-house.

The air-ship was not able to find a resting place here among the tall reeds and cane, so it was anchored about twenty feet above the ground and a gang ladder was let down.

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke descended for the purpose of taking a look about the vicinity.

As their feet struck the ground both saw that the path was a well beaten one, and extended far beneath the overhanging foliage of the jungle.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frank. "There is no danger of any snakes here. The path is too wide and—"

He ceased speaking.

Dr. Vaneyke was some distance ahead, and they were full fifty feet from the air-ship.

Suddenly a strange, hissing was heard.

Not ten feet ahead the dried moss and leaves beside the path seemed literally alive.

Into the path crawled a cobra and threw its sinuous form into a coil, with its head erect ready for battle. Just beyond was another, and while the two adventurers stood there, six of the deadly reptiles crawled into the path to bar their progress.

As they reared their hooded heads aloft, it was truly a hideous and terrifying sight.

Frank paused aghast, and then seizing Dr. Vaneyke's arm, turned back toward the air-ship.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN THE BLACK JUNGLE.

"COME!" he cried. "It is certain death to go in that direction."

"Upon my soul, I believe you are right, Frank!" cried the doctor. "I never saw the like in my life."

"What puzzles me," said Frank, "is the fact that we just saw a man enter this place."

"It must be that he has a charm, as Gulah says."

"Listen!"

Both came to a halt.

In the distance both heard a strange weird sound, the plaintive notes of most peculiar music.

There was no doubt but that it was notes of a snake-charmer's reed. Frank understood well now how the man in the coracle had dared to invade the jungle.

"That is the chap, and that is his method," he declared. "Well, perhaps we can rake up just as good a method."

"What shall we do?"

"Go back to the air-ship."

So back to the air-ship they went. Ascending the gang ladder they once more stood on deck.

Prince Gulah met them with a smile.

"Well," he said. "Now, what do you think of the terrors of the Black Jungle?"

"They are formidable indeed," declared Frank, "but there is a way to meet them."

"What is it?"

"I will show you."

"Good, sahib!"

Frank motioned to Barney and the two went

below. From the cabin the cases containing the electric armor was brought.

Naturally Barney was delighted to think that he had been selected by Frank to go upon the trip into the jungle.

Pomp was by the cabin door when Barney came out.

"Huh! Yo' needn't feel so big, I'sh, jes' be-kase youse gwine wif Marse Frank," sniffed Pomp. "I jes' reckon if dar was any danger some wo'k fo' to do, Marse Frank would take me an' leave yo' to home."

"Bejabers, don't yez insult me, naygur," retorted Barney, swelling up like a toad. "If yez do, I'll break the jaw av yez."

"Huh! yo' mus' learn fo' to spell able fust-ting."

"Begorra, I'll sphell yez wid a box an' five nails," exploded Barney, making a biff at Pomp. "Take that, yez misfit monkey, yez."

The palm of Barney's hand took Pomp across his thick lips, producing a sound like the crack of a pop gun. The darky nigh tumbled over.

But in an instant he had recovered, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Golly, yo' jes' dare fo' to hit me agin, chile," he roared. "I jes' pound yo' all to pieces, yo' big I'sh stuff!"

"Yez had better thry it."

"G'long, yo' no count Mick."

"Shut up ye black divil."

This latter compliment was too much for Pomp. Instantly he lowered his head and let drive at Barney.

But this time the Celt was too quick for him.

He dodged and Pomp went by him like a stone out of a catapult. Down the cabin stairs he went head first.

The fall would have brained a white man. But Pomp's skull was of the proverbial thickness.

It was too comical for anything. He struck the cabin floor below and actually pirouetted upon his head like a ballet dancer.

Barney literally roared with laughter. The Celt was so intensely amused that he seemed likely to go into a fit.

This infuriated the darky all the more and he came tearing up the stairs like a maniac. But a peremptory voice at this moment shouted:

"Hold up there! No more of that!"

It was Frank Reade, Jr., and that command could not be disregarded. Instantly the two jokers collapsed, but Pomp went back to the pilot-house, muttering:

"Golly, dat I'shman jes' get a little de bes' ob me dis time, but I jes' reckon I lay fo' him now, an' I fix him fo' suah."

At this moment Frank came on deck with his suit of armor on.

The electrical connections he had left off, for he did not reckon upon there being any need of making use of them.

Prince Gulah was wonderstruck.

"Good, sahib," he cried with delight. "It is wonderful. I have never seen the like."

"You can see now, prince," said Frank, calmly, "how I propose to defy the cobras. They can never hope to strike their venomous fangs through the steel meshes, and I can destroy them with a grip of my hand if I desire."

"Wonderful!" cried Gulah, clapping his hands. "It is better than the wizard's spell. Then you will go at once into the jungle?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that I could go also."

"You shall," replied Frank.

"Sahib speaks well. But I have no suit of armor."

"But I have another, declared Frank. "It is generally worn by Pomp. You shall put it on and come with us."

The prince overcome with joy fell at Frank's feet.

He blessed him in the Hindoo fashion and withal was quite carried away with joy.

But the young inventor said:

"It is nothing. We are more in your debt than we can ever repay. You saved the life of our companion."

"Ah, that was one little poor service, sahib," declared Gulah.

"It was a mighty service to us."

Pomp's suit of armor was brought out and Gulah was dressed up in it. Thus equipped and armed with Winchesters the three adventurers were ready to dare the dangers of the Black Jungle.

Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke were to remain and guard the air-ship.

Prince Gulah now began to feel confident of success in rescuing Nida and wreaking revenge upon the cowardly and villainous Nadja.

Consequently his spirits were high and he felt exceedingly jubilant.

Descending from the air-ship, the three men in armor started boldly along the path into the depths of the jungle.

Several of the cobras lay in their path. The deadly reptiles did not budge, and one of them struck with full force at Frank.

But the reptile's fangs were shivered against the steel armor, and the next moment its writhing form was crushed beneath the iron heel of Frank's foot.

The death of this one seemed to be a sort of signal to others.

The jungle seemed suddenly to literally swarm with cobras.

Hundreds of them flashed through the undergrowth and out into the path. They seemed to be banded together for the purpose of resisting this invasion of their den.

The path was literally alive with them.

Despite their armor the three men paused aghast at the spectacle.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Frank in amazement. "I never saw so many snakes before in all my life."

"They know that we are foes and they mean to fight us, sahib," cried Gulah.

"Be jabbers, I'm not in love with this job," cried Barney, with a shrug of the shoulders. "If the amadhouns should happen to pile onto us all to onct, phwat the divil wud become of us?"

"And more are coming," cried Frank; "that beats anything I ever saw before in my life."

"We had better go ahead at once," declared Gulah. "If not they may swarm so thick here as to prevent our going either way."

This suggestion was at once acted upon.

Forward they went and the next moment were in the midst of the deadly throng of reptiles.

A wonderful scene ensued.

The cobras with mad fury struck at the invaders, and even curled about their legs.

But the iron heels trod them under foot, a blow with a club dispatched them, and in this way the three men made their way with impunity through the wriggling mass which blocked their way.

But for the armor they would have been dead a hundred times.

For a time, as they kept on, it seemed as if there would be no end to the army of reptiles surging from the jungle.

But after a time the path became clear, and scarcely a cobra was in sight.

"By Jove! I believe we have got beyond the danger line," cried Frank.

But the words had barely left his lips, when a thrilling thing occurred.

There was a low, deep growl just ahead, a flash of color, and then down into the path directly in front of them there descended a mammoth specimen of the fierce, man-eating tiger.

He was a fierce monster, and brought the explorers to a halt with an awful sense of terror.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FIGHT WITH THE TIGER—DRIVEN TO BAY.

THE huge beast lay in their path, lashing its tail, and glaring at them in a fierce manner. Pen cannot describe the sensations of the three men.

Prince Gulah was the calmest.

He had faced the man-eater before, and knew perhaps better what to do than anyone else.

"It is the man-eater, sahib!" he muttered. "Wait, do not fire yet."

Frank had thrown his rifle to his shoulder for the purpose of firing a shot at the beast.

But he desisted at the advice of the Indian prince.

"Perhaps I can drive him away," said Gulah, coolly. "I will try it."

With wonderful coolness, the Hindoo drew from his pocket a small object.

As he held it up, Frank saw what it was. It was nothing more nor less than a Chinese fire ball.

These ignited, burned with a fierce fury for several minutes, and were dazzling in their brightness to look at.

Now if there is anything the tiger fears it is fire.

Brave enough at other times, fire will cow him and drive him from his quarry in many cases.

But there were exceptions, as, of course, there are in many cases. However, Gulah quickly ignited the fire ball.

Then he threw it directly at the tiger. It struck the ground directly in front of the big beast and flamed up furiously.

One moment the big animal crouched before the fire ball, then with a tremendous roar that seemed to shake the ground, it made a leap forward.

Directly over the flame the tiger leaped, and a warning cry came from Gulah.

"Sahib, look out! Fire quick!"

Then the Indian prince pulled the trigger of his rifle. Almost synonymously he dropped flat upon the ground.

The result was that the tiger, which had sprang at his throat, went clean over his prostrate form.

Striking the ground beyond, the beast lay a moment in a quivering heap, face to face with Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney.

For a moment he crouched there lashing his tail furiously.

A warning cry came from Gulah.

"Look out, Sahib. He will jump now."

Frank, swift as thought, threw his elephant rifle to his shoulder and fired.

It carried a deadly explosive shell. Frank had fired for the animal's mouth. Had the shell entered it, the tigers head would have been blown off and the struggle ended at once.

But unfortunately the shell struck the tiger in the breast.

A rent was torn in the thick hide and the muscles lacerated. It was a painful but not fatal wound, and just enough to inflame the beast's temper.

The next moment Frank had only time to behold a vision of yellow hide, flaming eyeballs and sharp white teeth. He was hurled to the ground with catapult force.

The big tiger's teeth closed upon his shoulder. The strong teeth grated over the steel armor, but did not penetrate it. This was the saving of the young inventor's life. But for the armor he would have been crushed to death.

An awful cry of horror went up from Barney and Gulah. For a moment they believed that Frank Reade, Jr.'s, fate was sealed.

"Och hone, Misther Frank is kilt, intoirely!" cried Barney, wildly. "Bad luck to the baste, I'll have his skin for it!"

With this the Celt placed his rifle muzzle plumb against the tiger's body and pulled the trigger.

The effect was marvelous. The big beast gave a plunge, a yell of agony, relaxed his hold upon Frank and turned upon Barney. But even as he did so the spark of life went out and the tiger fell dead.

Frank scrambled to his feet uninjured. Gulah sprang up, and Barney gave a wild whoop of triumph.

"Whurroo!" he yelled. "Shure that's the toime Barney Shea did his duty. Bad cess to the baste!"

It was certainly a narrow escape. But as no one was injured, mutual congratulations were exchanged, and then they pressed on along the path.

For some ways they journeyed on without hindrance, and finally the path began to broaden.

At every step almost they encountered cobras, but they had ceased to pay heed to these.

Suddenly a wild cry escaped Gulah's lips. At the same moment a feminine shriek went up on the air and then the sharp crack of a rifle followed.

Gulah reeled as the bullet struck him, but he recovered himself quickly and sprang forward.

Deep in a small clearing in the jungle was a cottage or bungalow, built of cane and light woods. It was overhung with vines and little could be seen of the structure except at close quarters.

At the window of this structure Gulah had seen a young girl of great beauty but pallid of feature. It was her cry which rang through the forest at sight of him.

"Nida!" cried the Indian prince, wildly. "It is you. I have come to save you."

But at that moment the form of a handsome dark skinned fellow of about Gulah's appearance and age appeared at the door.

At sight of the invaders he had snatched up a rifle and fired. The steel armor prevented Gulah's being hurt.

It was Prince Nadja, and he had dared to penetrate this perilous tract, and here construct a cage for his captive bird.

It was a cage which he had believed would be safe enough for all time, for he did not believe that any of his kind would dare invade the place.

Learning the art of the snake charmer, he had managed to travel with impunity in the jungle. He had brought Nida here with the greatest peril.

As it was, the interior of the house, doors and windows were protected with netting, through which the cobras could not crawl.

An old Hindoo woman, the wife of a snake charmer, was also an inmate of the place, and really was keeper over Nida.

It was certainly a secure hiding-place, but fate had brought the rescuers to the spot, and just at a good time too.

"Forward, sahibs!" cried Gulah, as he rushed on. "Death to the woman stealer! Down with him!"

"Prince Nadja, the abductor, saw that a crisis had come. He heard the words of his rival and shouted, defiantly:

"Come on and try, Nadja, if you dare. He will never give up Nida alive."

"Coward!" cried Gulah, impetuously. "I dare you to come out and fight me single handed."

"I do not fight with dogs!"

"You are a coward!"

"Perhaps I am, but you will never get Nida. She is mine, and before I give her up, I will kill her."

At the same moment there was a scuffle in the bungalow, and a wild scream. Then Prince Nadja appeared on the piazza with Nida in his arms.

He held her like a captive bird, and in his right hand was a murderous knife.

"Stop where you are!" he shouted.

"Coward!" cried Gulah, with an awful horror. "You will not dare to kill her."

"I dare anything," yelled the cornered villain. "I give you warning. If you do not desist in your attempt and leave the jungle at once, I will plunge this dagger into her heart. I have sworn that she shall be mine. Before she shall be yours I will kill her."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ON TO THE SOUTH POLE.

THIS announcement Nadja had made in the Hindoo tongue. But his expression and gestures were all comprehensive to the others.

Gulah, of course, understood every word. For a moment he stood literally petrified with horror.

He knew well enough that the wretch would keep his word and plunge the dagger into Nida's breast. It was a moment of horror and indecision.

"What shall be done, sahib?" groaned Gulah.

"He has got the best of us just now," said Frank. "But can we not reason with him?"

Gulah shook his head.

"Impossible!" he replied.

Nida lay over the wretch's arm quite insensible. The deadly knife hung in mid-air. The white face of the Hindoo woman keeper was at one of the windows.

"I mean it," reiterated Prince Nadja. "If you dare to advance a step further I will bury this knife in her heart!"

"Wretch!" cried Gulah, heatedly. "You will not dare do that."

"Yes, I dare."

"But she will be lost to both of us then."

"It matters not. If she cannot be mine, she shall not be yours. I have sworn it."

Gulah interpreted this to Frank and Barney. In their suits of armor they had nothing to fear from rifle balls and they might have attacked the bungalow with perfect safety.

But the wily Nadja knew that they would not make the attack at the sacrifice of Nida's life.

Clearly he had the best of the situation. Just how to circumvent him was now the question. Frank was thoughtful a moment. Then an idea came into his head. He hastened to carry it into execution.

"Gulah," he said, quietly. "You engage the villain in conversation. I will—"

But Frank did not finish the sentence. The sharp report of a pistol rang out upon the air. The abductor of beautiful Nida reeled, drop-

ped the knife in his hand, threw up his arms and fell.

Prince Gulah, white-faced, stood with the smoking pistol in his hand.

"Tell me not that I have killed her," he cried, in a constrained voice. "I will then kill myself."

"No!" cried Frank, excitedly, as he sprung forward. "You have done her no harm, Gulah, but you dared much in firing that shot."

"It was the only chance."

"Yes, and it counted."

The Hindoo muttered a prayer of thanks to his Deity, and followed at Frank's heels. Reaching the prostrate pair, Frank bent down over them.

The Hindoo was dead.

The bullet had pierced his heart. It was a wonderful shot for Prince Gulah. The Princess Nida was uninjured.

Frank drew a brandy flask from his pocket and applied it to her lips. The draught brought the color to her cheeks and she opened her eyes.

This was to look up into the face of her true love. It was a powerful elixir, and had the effect of quickly reviving her.

That meeting between the lovers was a most joyous one. Frank and Barney busied themselves with searching the cabin and making a prisoner of the old woman who had been Nida's keeper.

Prince Gulah presented Nida to the Americans a short while later. She could not speak English, but she looked her unutterable gratitude to them.

A return to the air-ship was now proposed. It was then arranged that the Zephyr should land them at the point where the prince's body guard was in waiting.

On the return to the air-ship the Princess Nida was carried upon the shoulders of Barney and Gulah. Thus elevated she stood in no danger from the poisonous fangs of the cobras.

A perfect legion of the snakes were encountered on the return. But protected as they were by the suits of armor the three rescuers did not mind them in the least.

The old Hindoo woman by her own request was left in the jungle. The body of Nadja was buried there.

In due course they came out of the jungle path and upon the shore of the lake.

Here they found the Zephyr all right and they were hailed heartily by Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke.

In a few moments they were once more safely on board.

Explanations followed, a joyful reunion was the result, and then the Zephyr sailed away bird-like upon its return over the jungle.

It was not long before the spot was sighted from which they had started. The Hindoo body-guard was yet there, and they greeted the air-ship with wild cheers.

The Zephyr settled down upon the earth once more, and Prince Gulah wrung Frank's hand, as he said earnestly:

"Sahib, I shall never forget you. You have made me the happiest person in all the world. I only wish I had an air-ship like this. My fortune and my title are yours if you will only build me one like it."

"That would be quite impossible," said Frank, with a smile. "However, I am glad to have been able to serve you. Good-bye."

Frank saluted Prince Gulah and Nida, the prince's guard cheered, and the air-ship rose like a bird.

Frank and his companions waved the American flag over the rail. Then the Zephyr took a due southerly course.

In a few hours the open sea made the horizon and the island of Ceylon was taken farewell of.

"Now for the South Pole!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "You will not attempt to cross over to Australia, Frank?"

"No," replied the young inventor, decidedly. "A straight course for the South Pole, and then once more nothward for Cape Horn, and thence home."

"Which will complete our wonderful trip from north to south around the globe."

"If nothing bars us."

"I trust nothing may."

"We have had good luck thus far," declared Frank, "and have accomplished much good."

"You are right."

"If the rest of our journey is as successful we need find no fault."

"Not a bit of it."

The Zephyr maintained a comfortable altitude now of a thousand feet, and moved swiftly along on her course.

The skies were beautiful and the air balmy. The ocean breeze was cooling and enjoyable.

Numerous small archipelagoes were passed over, and after a time all land fell out of sight.

Only the peculiar dull yellow haze of the southern ocean lay all about. Occasionally a ship was seen flying the American or British flag.

But of all the craft which dotted the mighty expanse, the most were Chinese junks, Malay proas and vessels of the same ilk.

It could be seen that the appearance of the air-ship made a great sensation upon the decks of the vessels below.

In a few cases salutes were fired, and one piratical-looking craft tried to send a cannonball up and fetch the floating wonder down.

But, fortunately, the shot did not reach the Zephyr.

By way of retaliation, Frank dropped a bomb in the water, the commotion created nearly swamping the questionable craft.

This settled the argument at once, and the uncivil one went its way sadder and, perhaps, wiser.

Still to the southward, day after day, the Zephyr kept. Soon a noticeable change in temperature was noted.

They were leaving the tropics and approaching rapidly the cooler atmosphere of the lower Temperate Zone. This was not a disagreeable realization and the spirits of all were high.

"What land shall we strike next, Frank?" asked Dr. Vaneyke, as he strolled into the cabin where the young inventor was busily studying some charts.

"Well," said Frank, with a smile, "it will be some time before we are permitted to feast our gaze upon the land again."

"I suppose so."

"We shall encounter a few islands, but for the most part it is all open sea from here to the Antarctic continent. We shall not see much land there, you know, for it is all covered with ice and snow."

"Unless there is a warm valley around the South Pole."

"I hardly credit that. The first point of land we come to, however, will be what is called Termination Land. I propose to keep along the coast to Repulse bay."

"Ah, that is a grand idea. We shall soon know whether there is an inner sea or not, a question much mooted among former explorers of this part of the world. This will be worth everything to science."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OVER THE ICE FIELDS.

"WHICH ought to make your fame, doctor," cried Frank. "You should begin work upon a drawing to be known forever as Vaneyke's chart."

"Ah, the fame belongs not to me so much as to you, sir," replied the scientist, heartily. "I may make the chart, but you have the credit of the invention of this wonderful air-ship, which enabled me to come hither and make it."

"Yet such a chart would be a wonderful aid to mariners in the Antarctic waters."

"Very true," replied the doctor, "and I am the luckiest man in the world to be able to make it."

Frank left the cabin and went out upon deck.

The day was beautiful, the sky cloudless, and the ocean like a mirror. Far to the eastward two ships lay becalmed.

But the air-ship kept on the same steady course to the southward. Frank looked in that direction and reflected that the distance was mighty and that weeks even must pass before it was covered by the Zephyr in spite of its mighty rate of speed.

Small islands were frequent. Some of these were inhabited and some were not. The natives were mostly of the copper colored type peculiar to the South Seas.

Only once was a descent made and then it was to fill the storage jars with water.

The Zephyr kept on her meteor like flight. Hundreds of miles of water was passed over in that mighty passage in air.

Much in the line of curious phenomena was seen. The Polar Lights at times showed above the horizon with wonderful brilliancy. Sometimes at night the sea presented one bright phosphorescent blaze, looking like a sea of fire.

The search-light of the Zephyr directed down upon it produced an effect wholly indescribable. Altogether the trip was a novel and wonderful one.

Nobody enjoyed it more than the aged scientist himself, Dr. Vaneyke.

He was constantly entering new data in his journal, and fresh material was always at hand.

At proper intervals Frank took bearings and found that they were rapidly nearing the Antarctic Seas.

The air now began to grow colder, the skies clearer and less balmy. At times a southerly gale was seen to sweep the sea.

The air-ship avoided these by rising above them. In fact no accident of any kind, or unpleasant experience had thus far befallen them.

Soon it became positively chilly, and one day the voyagers appeared on deck with overcoats on.

Then came a change of flannels and the donning of thicker garments all around. Furs soon were necessary, artificial heat was required in the cabin and much of the time was spent there.

Frost appeared upon the steelwork of the air-ship, and snow squalls were not infrequent. It was quite evident that they were upon the borders of the South Frigid Zone.

Icebergs were frequent, and one morning Frank called Dr. Vaneyke to the rail.

He held his glass to his eyes and said:

"Doctor, as sure as you live, we are in sight of land."

"Eh!" exclaimed the doctor. "You don't tell me that?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then the Antarctic Continent is near at hand?"

"So it seems."

"Good! That will be another rare chance for me to add to my store of specimens and scientific data."

"I think it will," agreed Frank. "I think you will find it a pretty cold place to explore, though."

But Dr. Vaneyke had no thought of hardship in the pursuit of his favorite vocation.

He procured a glass, and proceeded to study the distant line of the Antarctic Continent. It seemed to him as if the air-ship crawled along at snail's pace.

"Only to think," he reflected, exuberantly. "I am given a chance heretofore accorded to no other scientist in the world. I shall pass directly over the unexplored regions of the South Pole. I shall soon be able to solve the mystery of centuries."

Indeed, it did appear that the doctor had a wonderful opportunity.

Barney and Pomp, however, were disposed to view it in a more practical mood.

Barney, on the fore-deck, was slapping his hands around his sides in the vain attempt to keep them warm.

"Begorra, it's too blasted cold for me any way!" he cried. "Shure I niver can stand it at all, at all!"

"Huh!" grunted Pomp, disdainfully. "Yo' won't die fo' it, I'ish. I jes' reckon yo' ain't sugar nor salt. Yo' won't freeze nor melt in dese times."

"Be jabbers, who axed yez to put in yer oar, naygur?" roared Barney, excitedly. "Shure, if yez thry that agen, I'll shpile the beauty av yer face for yez!"

"Yo' amn't able, Irisher."

"Ain't able, eh?" growled Barney. "On me worrud, if yez say that agin I dhop yez over the rail!"

"Don' give us no mo' ob yo' cheap talk!" retorted Pomp, who was inclined to be plucky. "I don' care nuffin' fo' yo' at all, sah."

"Bejabbers, I'll make yez care!" cried the Celt, excitedly. "Shure, I'll tache ye a lesson of civility to a gintleman!"

"Yo' call yo'sef a gentleman?" cried Pomp, derisively. "Huh! yo' amn't anyfin' but a big blowing Mick. I don' care two cents for yo', sah!"

"Yez don't, eh?" growled Barney. "Jist howld yer breath an' I'll show yez a thrick or two. Shure, I'm onto yez."

With this Barney picked up a greasy rag, made into a wad, and flung it at Pomp.

It took the darky fair in the right eye, and completely closed it. A howl of pain burst from the darky's lips.

Then Barney roared with laughter. To him it seemed the funniest thing imaginable. But it was not so funny a moment later.

The darky recovered suddenly, and yelled:

"Massy sakes, but yo' nigh killed me, chile. I'll get square wif yo' dis very minnit."

Quick as thought Pomp picked up a wad of the same material and flung it at Barney.

It took the Celt fair in the stomach. With a gasp Barney sat down very hard upon the deck.

"Murther!" he howled, between intervals for breath. "Shure, ye have—kilt—me intirely. I'll—have the—the loife av yez fer this!"

Pomp was now the one to laugh. It is said that he who laughs last laugh best. Certainly the darky did the act in hearty style.

Barney recovered in a moment, however, and would have made another rush at his tormenter, but at that moment a loud cry came from forward.

Dr. Vaneyke was at the rail and had cried excitedly:

"Land ho!"

"Whereaway?" shouted Frank Reade, Jr., as he rushed from the cabin.

"Dead to the southeast," replied the scientist. "I take it that it must be the Antarctic continent."

"Right you are," cried Frank. "It can be nothing else."

All crowded forward to view the wonderful sight.

A long white line on the horizon was all that could be seen of the Polar land. But the sea below was one vast ice field, and the cold wind which swept the Zephyr's decks was such as to make the explorers shiver in their fur suits.

It seemed certain that they had at last come to the wonderful and unexplored land of the South Pole.

Nearer the air-ship drew.

A more dismal and desolate sight the human mind could not conceive.

The vast still plains of ice and snow, the absence of vegetation or animal life of any kind was a scene so drear and lonesome as to nigh pall upon one's senses. One thought filled the minds of all, and this was what a horrible fate it would be to be left alone in this awful wilderness.

The very grave-like stillness would seem to drive one stark raving mad.

With a shiver all turned away but Dr. Vaneyke.

The scientist seemed fascinated by the scene, and as he continued to gaze upon it, a startling sight met his gaze.

It was an object in the vast expanse which attracted his gaze, and held it for a moment, until a wild cry burst from his lips.

"Ho! ship ahoy!"

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, all started as if shot.

"What?" cried Frank, in great amazement.

"A ship in this awful spot?"

"That is the truth!" replied Dr. Vaneyke, earnestly. "Just look out yonder?"

All gazed in the direction indicated by the scientist, and his affirmation was at once verified.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ICE-BOUND SHIP.

THERE, not five miles distant, and seemingly wedged in among the ice floes were visible the white sails of a ship.

It was apparently a vessel of the whaling type. It seemed nipped in the ice.

The first question that arose in the minds of the explorers of course was as to whether the crew were yet alive or not.

At that distance of course no sign of life could be seen.

"It is very likely some sealing vessel which has got caught among the ice floes," declared Frank.

"Begorra, I don't see anything av the crew," said Barney.

"No, they are not in sight," replied Frank. "It is possible that they are in the cabin."

"If they have survived," modified Dr. Vaneyke.

"Unless the ship has been here for many years I would venture that we will find them alive," declared Frank.

"Let us hope so."

"Bejabbers, mebbe we kin do thim a good turn, jist as we did the Englishmen in India," said Barney.

"The results of this trip around the world

will certainly not be devoid of the humane element," cried Frank. "We have been fortunate enough to render succor to many unfortunate people thus far."

"That is the best part of the trip," cried Dr. Vaneyke.

But the Zephyr now bore down toward the ice bound ship.

Very soon the air ship settled down and rested upon the ice field not fifty yards from the vessel.

It was seen to be a craft of quite large size, full rigged for a clipper ship, and the deck was roofed over in the fashion of Arctic vessels.

But no smoke came from the galley pipes, nor was there a footprint in the snow, or sign of life about.

This looked ominous indeed to the explorers.

"Upon my word," muttered Frank, "it begins to look to me as if the crew of this unfortunate ship were all dead."

"Let us hope not," rejoined Dr. Vaneyke.

The gang ladder was lowered, and Frank and Barney prepared to pay a visit to the ice-bound ship.

In a few moments they were ready. As the snow was quite deep, it was necessary to use snow-shoes.

In this manner Barney and Frank covered the intervening distance.

When they reached the door to the ship's cabin they felt satisfied that no living being was on board.

Frank was prepared to see a row of ghastly skeletons inside as he forced in the door.

The old ship's timbers creaked as they stepped into the cabin. The air was chill and cellar like. At first it seemed dark, but as their eyes got accustomed to the light the visitors were able to look about them.

To Frank's relief, however, no dead bodies, no ghastly skeletons were seen. The appointments of the cabin were seen to be rich and tasty.

The two explorers made a hasty trip through the vessel. Stores and everything seemed intact. The great question was as to what had become of the crew.

That they had left the ship was certain, but at what time and in what manner it was not easy to guess.

However, in returning through the cabin, Frank saw the open pages of a log book on the table.

At once he proceeded to read the entries as follows:

"May the 5th, 18—

"On board the ship Vesta, of New Bedford, Mass., U. S. A. Captain Jerry Stearns, master: Making Cape Horn the latter part of February, we have been blown from our course by terrific gales and head winds, until we have found ourselves in the ice floes of the Antarctic circle. For a month we have in vain tried to find a way out of this wilderness of ice and boundless solitude.

"But every effort has proved of no avail, and we are at a loss to know what to do. The Antarctic winter has set in and we cannot move from here for seven or eight months, at least. God alone knows what will be our fate. May He be with us."

Here the journal broke off. Only a few more entries of minor importance were found.

Frank read the jotting with interest, but the mystery was not yet solved by any means.

What had become of the crew?

Had they deserted the ship and made their escape in some way over the ice fields? Yet this did not seem probable.

A solution of the mystery did not seem near at hand.

"What do yez think av it, Misther Frank?" asked Barney.

"I don't know what to think," replied the young inventor.

"Shure it's quare enough!"

"Yes, it is. One thing is sure. The crew of this ship are not now on board of her."

"That's thrue, but phwat the devil has become av thim?"

"It is a mystery. There are several explanations. One might be that they left the ship of their own accord; another that they have been rescued by some visiting vessel, and again they may have wandered away and got lost."

"Begorra, if it's the latter, I'm thinkin' ye'll niver see thim again."

"You are right, Barney. They have long since perished in the ice fields."

"Shure, I hope not."

"So do I. Yet I must confess there is little hope of ever finding them."

"Och hone! thats too bad."

"Let us make a more thorough search of the cabin. Then we can tell to a better purpose."

"All roight, sor."

Another search of the cabin was made. But it resulted in little beyond discovering the fact that the Vesta had sailed from New Bedford two years previous and had been on the way to Chili for a cargo of nitrate.

Many evidences of the character of the crew were found.

By the ship's register it was seen that fourteen men constituted all the souls on board. That they were simply seafaring men was evident.

This was all of any importance that they could gather, and satisfied of this fact Frank said:

"Come, Barney, let's go back to the Zephyr."

"All roight, sor."

They left the cabin of the vessel and started across the ice for the air-ship.

But they had not taken ten steps when a startled cry burst from Barney.

"Shure, Mr. Frank, wud yez luk at that!"

Frank did look at the object indicated by Barney. It was a thrilling sight.

Upheaved by the pressure of the ice field was one block of ice of many tons weight. In its clear, crystal-like body was the form of a man, wrapped in canvas as if prepared for burial.

That it was one of the crew of the ship who had died and been buried in the ice was certain. The two explorers gazed at it with horror, and undoubtedly would have taken some action regarding it, but at that moment a wild cry came from the air-ship.

The ice plain was suddenly seen to pitch and heave, and Frank and Barney were thrown violently down.

Great ice cakes thundered about them, and they seemed certain to be engulfed in their midst which would mean a horrible death.

CHAPTER XL.

THE CASTAWAYS ARE FOUND.

It was a perilous position in which Frank and Barney were placed. The vast ice field had started to break up at an unfavorable moment.

Roth were thrown upon their faces but were quickly upon their feet. It was Pomp who had sent up the warning cry from the air-ship's deck.

The brave darky saw the peril of his companions and was quick to act.

"Doctor, yo' jes' go to de pilot-house!" he cried. "Let de Zephyr up for a few feet. Den I do de rest."

Pomp seized a rope, while the scientist did as he was bid. Into the pilot-house he sprang and the air-ship shot up into the air.

Then Pomp flung down the rope. It fell luckily within the reach of Frank Reade, Jr.

He grasped it and at the same moment threw an arm about Barney. The noose in the rope slipped over Frank's shoulders and tightened.

The young inventor hung to the rope and shouted:

"All right, Pomp! Pull away!"

There was little need of the adjuration. Pomp was joined by Dr. Vaneyke and both began to pull upon the rope.

But it quickly became evident that the strain was too much for them.

Seeing this, Frank shouted:

"Take a turn about something, Pomp. Then hold firm."

At the same moment Frank said to Barney:

"You hang onto the rope. Don't lose courage and hang on."

"All roight, sor!" replied Barney.

Then Frank began to go hand over hand up the rope. This left Barney dangling below, but the Celt hung on pluckily.

Up the rope Frank went and very soon had reached the rail of the air-ship. Over it he sprang and onto the deck of the air-ship.

Then he rejoined Dr. Vaneyke and Pomp. Seizing hold of the rope he cried:

"Three of us ought to pull Barney aboard. Now, all together."

All together they did pull and up came Barney. In another moment the Celt was safe aboard the Zephyr.

The ice below was tossing and crashing wildly. The ship, ice-bound for many months, seemed likely to change its position and perhaps be freed from the embrace in which it had been so long.

The voyagers on board the Zephyr watched the phenomenon with deep interest.

"Begorra, I think av the crew av that ship were on board now, they wud be loikely to get free," cried Barney.

"Golly! dat's a fac!" agreed Pomp.

"Yes," said Frank, slowly, "it looks as if the Vesta would drift out with the pack ice. There is no doubt but that the summer current has set in, and this whole field of ice will drift northward until the warmer waters dissolve it."

"Correct," agreed Dr. Vaneyke; "that is a certain sure thing."

"Bejabers, an' cud yez tell me what wud become av the ship whin it gets free from the ice?" cried Barney.

"Surely!" replied Frank. "She will sail about at random until some gale swamps her and sends her to the bottom of the sea."

"Massy sakes alibe!" cried Pomp. "Dat am a pity, fo' she am a nice ship."

"Yes, she is a nice ship," agreed Frank. "Her timbers, no doubt, are as sound as ever, in spite of being encased so long in the ice."

"I have it, Misther Frank!" cried Barney, excitedly.

"What?"

"Shure, it may be that the poor divils are alive yet, an' we may run acrost some av thim. If we do, sor—"

"If we do," interrupted Frank, "we will certainly restore them to their ship. But I am not sanguine."

"Golly! I jes' hopes we will," put in Pomp, with shining eyes. "Dat would be de bes' fing yet."

"It is not impossible," rejoined Dr. Vaneyke.

But Frank was skeptical. He did not believe that any of the crew of the Vesta had survived.

However, nothing was to be gained by remaining in the vicinity.

The Zephyr once more took her course over the ice fields and pursued it.

The ship, however, and her crew was the subject of general discourse.

In general respects the scenery of the South Polar region did not materially differ from that of the North Pole.

It looked, if possible, a trifle more drear and uninviting. Animal and vegetable life was not so common. Yet there were the same ice floes, the mighty glaciers and the vast bergs just as seen beyond the 80th degree north.

Pomp and Barney would not abandon the hope of finding the crew of the Vesta.

The long Antarctic day was on, and the spell of darkness was slight indeed. It was very enjoyable to sit on the deck, thickly encased from head to foot in furs, and watch the polar phenomena, which was ever present, day and night.

Frank busied himself with Dr. Vaneyke making scientific observations and records.

But Barney and Pomp kept an incessant watch at the rail, with the firm and fond belief that they would surely sight the Vesta's castaways.

And one morning their efforts found reward.

Barney in the pilot-house saw something that looked like a flag far distant over the ice waters.

He seized a glass and gave it a critical survey. In a moment his suspicions were confirmed.

"Whurroo!" he shouted. "Wud yez come here, naygur? On me worrud, there's the crew av the ship as we've been on the lookout for."

"Golly, you're right, I ish!" cried Pomp, wildly. "Jes' call Marse Frank as soon as yo can."

But Frank had heard the words and came forward instantly.

"What do you chaps mean?" he exclaimed, tersely. "Are you in earnest?"

"Cut me froat, kill me dead," asserted Pomp, earnestly, "we jes' tell yo' de solemn fac', Marse Frank."

"Begorra, the naygur is roight," cried Barney. "Ivery worrud he speaks is the truth."

Frank said no more, but at once seized the glass and began to study the distant flag.

He became at once satisfied that it indeed marked a camp and that human beings, perhaps the crew of the Vesta, were its inmates.

Pomp had gone to the pilot-house and headed the Zephyr directly toward the flag.

The air-ship now bore down toward it with full speed. In a few moments a large ice hut was seen, and about it were congregated half a dozen men clad in fur suits.

They were waving their hands and seemed much excited at sight of the air-ship. The U. S. flag which hung from the pole above the hut was tattered and torn by the violent winter winds.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney. "I tell ye it is the crew av the Vesta. Shure, it's luck we've sthruck this toime."

But if those on board the air-ship were pleased, the forlorn remnant of the castaway crew were a hundred-fold more overjoyed.

They seemed to view the air-ship with wonder and then broke into a wild dance of delight.

Every moment the Zephyr drew nearer and soon hung over the camp not more than one hundred feet above.

Frank at the rail hailed the castaways:

"Ahoy the camp!" he shouted.

"Ahoy the air-ship!" came back the reply from a gray bearded man, whose haggard features and wild eyes bespoke the life of privation and hardship he had endured for a long time.

"Who are you?"

"We are the crew of the ship Vesta, cast-away fourteen months ago. I am Jerry Stearns, the ship's master. Six of us are left—the rest have passed in their final accounts!"

"Captain Stearns, I greet you!" replied Frank, cheerily. "I think your troubles are at an end."

"God be praised, if that is the truth! But who are you and what manner of wonderful ship is that which sails in the air?"

"This is the Zephyr, an invention of mine, and I am Frank Reade, Jr., an American citizen."

"I greet you, Mr. Reade," replied Captain Stearns. "Certainly your invention is a wonderful one. A new era is certainly at hand, now that the problem of navigation of the air is solved."

"You are right, sir," replied the young inventor, cheerily; "but how are you fixed? Have you plenty of provisions?"

Captain Stearns lifted his haggard face and replied:

"We have lived for a month on seals' blubber. But now the seals are gone, and this morning we ate the last morsel of food."

CHAPTER XL.

RELEASED FROM ICY BONDAGE.

FRANK READE, JR., looked the horror he felt as he said:

"My God! you are just on the verge of starvation."

"That is the size of it," replied Captain Stearns. "And, indeed, we had suffered so much that it seemed a relief to welcome death."

Frank's voice was thick with emotion as he replied:

"Well, my friend, you shall cheer up for we intend to rescue you."

"What? Will you take us all aboard your air-ship?"

"Yes."

"But that is too much joy," replied Captain Stearns, wildly. "Are you sure that the ship will hold us up?"

Frank laughed.

"Yes, and much more!" he replied. "Just keep up a good heart."

"But you cannot mean to take us back to America?"

"I will put it in your way to get back to America."

"Ah, how can you do that?"

"Supposing I place you safely on board the Vesta?"

A wild cry escaped Stearns' lips.

"The Vesta!" he cried. "Impossible! She is sunk in the Antarctic Ocean."

"No, she is not."

"What?"

"That is the truth."

"Do you mean to tell me that my ship, the Vesta, is safe and sound?"

"I do!"

This was too much for the bluff captain. His weakened nerves gave way and he broke down and sobbed like a child.

"This is too much joy!" he cried. "It is far more than I merit."

The gang ladder was lowered; the castaways came aboard the Zephyr.

They showed plainly the effects of their long period of privation, and were all treated to a royal good dinner by Pomp.

After this they revived and seemed like new beings. The air-ship at once took a back course to the spot where the Vesta had been last seen.

Frank had hopes of overtaking the ice-floe in which they had last seen the Vesta before it got out to sea, or in such a position that the Vesta would be likely to break up.

The crew of the Vesta were now on deck and eagerly taking in the novelty of a voyage on board the Zephyr.

To them it was a wonderful experience, though the bluff old sailors who had from infancy battled the ocean's storms would shake their heads, and say:

"It's not the same as life aboard a good, stanch ship. Give me the ocean waves and the stiff, salt breeze."

But Captain Stearns was an exception.

"I tell you navigation of the air is solved!" he declared. "It is wonderful. I'll have me an air-ship now."

Frank smiled, but made no comment. He did not try to undeceive the old skipper that the secret of the air-ship was all his own, and money could not buy it.

The Zephyr kept on at a clipping pace for hours.

Barney with a glass kept a constant lookout for the Vesta. At length just to the northward he espied the masts and rigging of the ship.

But she had changed her position greatly, and as they drew nearer now it was easy to see that the ice had broken up about her and that she was really floating in the water free and clear.

This was most encouraging and Captain Stearns was almost beside himself with joy.

As they drew still nearer, a narrow strait was seen to have opened up to the northward.

"Hurrah!" cried Captain Stearns, exuberantly. "We shall be able to cut a way through that loose-ice to that strait, and once in that with the ship under sail we can make the open sea."

"Ye're right, capen!" cried one of the crew. "Let us hang to and pull the ship through."

"Of course we will. Stand ready to go aboard."

The Zephyr now descended until within about twenty feet of the ship's rail.

Then a gang ladder was let down that distance and one by one the crew went down to the Vesta's deck.

At once Captain Stearns made a critical examination of the ship's timbers.

"She's all right for many a long voyage yet!" he cried. "We'll have her all ship-shape in no time."

The crew went to work at once clearing the ice from the deck and the masts.

The warm winds had already caused it to relax from the ropes, and these were soon in playing order.

They seemed none the worse for the freeze, as the sails, upon being unfurled, were found in an excellent state of preservation.

They were soon spread and drying.

In a remarkably short space of time the ship looked like a rejuvenated being.

Smoke was pouring from the galley pipes, and there was a great bustle on the decks.

The Zephyr hung over the ship all the while this was going on.

Captain Stearns now turned his thoughts to the breaking of a way through the ice.

He would have sent out men with axes, but Frank shouted down from the air-ship:

"Remain aboard your ship, and I will get you out of that fix."

"How will you do that?" asked the captain, in surprise.

"I will show you."

Frank went into the cabin and came out with an electric bomb.

He went to the rail of the ship and told Pomp to send the Zephyr ahead a short distance.

Pomp obeyed, and then choosing a convenient spot, Frank let the bomb drop.

It struck the ice with a stunning explosion. The effect was most remarkable to witness.

The ice field shook and trembled and rose in great billows. There was a gigantic upheaval and a wide channel was instantly opened.

Into this the Vesta drifted, completely free of the ice, and a mighty cheer went up from the crew.

They sprang into the rigging, and sails were at once spread and the ship filled away before the wind.

The Zephyr hung over the Vesta until the snip got well out into the main channel.

Then, when it was seen that she was certain to make her way eventually out of the Antarctic seas, a farewell was taken and the Zephyr stood away on her course over the South Pole.

For many days the air-ship kept on over that mighty waste of snow and ice.

Then warmer breezes were encountered, open bodies of water were seen, land birds were frequent, and Frank, taking his bearings, announced that they were rapidly nearing the waters of the South Atlantic.

"We shall stand straight over for Cape Horn!" he declared. "It will not be many weeks now before we may hope to see home."

"Bejabers, that's good news!" cried Barney, joyfully. "Shure, there's no place loike home."

"You're right dar, chile!" cried Pomp, cheerily. "I jes' fink I'll be glad enuff fo' to see home."

"Well, I shall go home quite well satisfied," said Dr. Vaneyke, complacently. "I have gained all that I had hoped to in the line of science."

"At least we will have accomplished the feat of circumnavigating the globe from north to south," cried Frank.

"That is certainly a feat to be proud of," rejoined Dr. Vaneyke.

But the end of the journey had not yet been reached. Thrilling events were in store near at hand.

The Zephyr rapidly cleared the region of ice and snow. Soon she had left even the icebergs behind, and the dark rolling waters of the South Atlantic were everywhere about.

"In another day we shall sight Cape Horn," declared Frank.

It now became necessary to gradually remove the furs and thick clothing. The air rapidly became warmer.

But even when Cape Horn was finally sighted, it was comfortable only with an overcoat on.

The mighty crags and mountains of the famous cape loomed up in view first of all. They furnished a grand spectacle of scenic grandeur.

Then the air-ship passed over the great straits, and soon was floating over the mountainous part of Patagonia.

A day later, and the mighty and famous Pampas with their thousands of miles of level plains burst into view.

Still northward the air-ship went.

The days passed and many wonderful sights were witnessed, but no incident worthy of note occurred until one day, when they hung a thousand feet high over the interior woods of Brazil.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE YANKEE EXPLORER.

THE Zephyr had made wonderfully rapid progress in her course around the world, considering the amount of time consumed in making stops and unavoidable delays.

Frank was very much pleased and announced that the air-ship was beyond doubt the peer of all his inventions.

Dr. Vaneyke agreed with him, as did Barney and Pomp.

It began to look as if the trip was bound to turn out a big blooming success. Much had been accomplished and they had come through many perils in safety.

Dr. Vaneyke had furthered the interests of science in a very satisfactory manner.

The old man was beside himself with pleasure.

"I shall be the envied of my profession," he declared. "I have specimens and records which many a man would give much to possess."

As for Barney and Pomp, they avowed that they had enjoyed this last trip more than any other ever taken.

Frank shook his head soberly and said:

"Don't be too sure, friends. We have not reached home yet and there are many hundreds of miles of perilous travel before us yet."

"You may be right, Frank," said the doctor, earnestly, "but seriously, do you think we are so deeply threatened with danger as when on the other side of the sphere?"

"Why, certainly I do," replied Frank, readily.

"How do you make that out?"

"All that you need to do is to look down upon yonder wild jungle. That turbid broad river flowing through it is the Amazon."

All went to the rail to gaze upon the king of rivers.

Even as they did so a great cry went up from Barney's lips.

"Wud yez luk at that, Misther Frank? Oh! did yez iver see the loikes?"

"Golly, Marse Frank, dem free men am done fo'."

"Heavens, Frank!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, wildly. "One of them is a white man."

Frank had perceived this fact just as quickly as the others.

He knew that something had got to be done at once. He was quick to act, as was the case with him always.

The scene viewed by the voyagers was a most thrilling one.

Upon the bosom of the turbid river was a dugout or Indian canoe. It held three occupants, two of whom Frank saw were natives, and the other a white man.

The two Indians were pulling for dear life, while the white man stood in the stern with clubbed rifle ready to strike at a monster snake of a species between the anaconda and the water snake.

These are a species more dreaded than any other reptile in the wilds of Brazil.

The natives who do not always fear to face the anaconda, will turn pale at the mention of the zetsi or water anaconda.

The huge reptile, often forty feet in length, will not hesitate to attack a boat, and throwing its huge coils about it, will drag it and its occupants down to a horrible death in the waters of the river.

Frank had heard of this reptile, but had never before seen one.

His face was white and resolute as he seized an electric bomb from a case near. Quick as thought Frank dropped the bomb with true aim.

It struck the water not three feet from the reptile's body. The result was thrilling to witness.

There was a terrific explosion; a wall of water arose high in the air. When it subsided the snake's body lay upon the surface of the water belly upward.

The natives in the canoe appeared more frightened of the air-ship than of the water snake.

They instantly dived overboard and started to swim to the shore. But the white man arose and waved his arms with a loud cheer.

"Kiyi!" yelled Pomp. "Didn't we jes' cook dat snake's bre'kfus' fo' him, eh? Golly! I jes' finks it don't trubble us no mo'!"

"Begorra, that's so!" cried Barney.

"Lower the ship, Barney!" ordered Frank. The command was quickly obeyed.

"Ay, ay, sor!" cried Barney, as he sprang into the pilot-house.

When fifty feet above the water Frank hailed the white man in the canoe.

"Hello, friend!" he cried. "I give you greeting."

"The same to you," replied the white man in English.

Frank saw there was no doubt but that he was an American.

"I owe you my life!" shouted the stranger.

"I must bow homage to the man who can travel in such an invention as that. Who are you?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr."

"What! The inventor of so many wonderful machines, for instance, the Steam Man, and the Steam Horses?"

"The same."

"I am given much honor to meet you, Mr. Reade. I have always been interested in your inventions, of which I read much. I am a traveler and my name is Sam Hooper. My mission is to explore the Amazon and write a book upon the subject."

"Very good, Mr. Hooper," replied Frank.

"Won't you come aboard?"

"I will with great pleasure."

"And your companions?"

"Never mind them. They are a worthless pair of rascals, and are at home anywhere in these parts."

"All right."

A rope ladder was lowered and Hooper came aboard, leaving the canoe to float about at will.

The astonishment depicted upon his face as he stepped upon the Zephyr's deck was most wonderful to witness.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed, emphatically.

"This beats all the inventions of modern times. Certainly it is wonderful!"

Frank proceeded to show Hooper about the air-ship, to his keen delight.

Then the explorer began an account of his own experiences.

"I have been in these wilds for three years," he declared. "I have been almost hopelessly lost fully six times, and only escaped death by just a miracle, as your coming along just in time to shoot that big snake."

"When do you expect to conclude your explorations?" asked Frank.

"In another year. Just at present I have a matter in hand of most vital interest and importance to me. There is a story among the Indians of the existence of a river, tributary to the Amazon, and of which no explorer has yet given an account."

"Its mouth is rather obscure, being mostly hidden by reeds and swamp. It is believed to

be near here. With your air-ship, it would be an easy matter for you to discover it. I would gladly share the honor of discoverer with you."

"Indeed!" said Frank, heartily. "I will help you in any way I can."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Reade. I felt sure that you would. I shall be able to make my exploration with safety, for dangers innumerable beset a man's path."

"Are there any hostile natives hereabouts?" asked Frank.

"Ah, many of them. The most powerful is the Ybari. They are huge men and savage fighters."

"Well, I need not inform you that it will not be necessary to fear them now," declared Frank. "You are safe on board the Zephyr."

"Oh, certainly. Ah, what is that?"

A strange noise came up from the river reeds below. Suddenly out into the river shot a long war canoe. In it were half a score armed savages.

"The Ybari!" cried Hooper, with excitement; "they fear nothing. See, they even have the temerity to attack the air-ship."

This was true. The Ybari warriors with savage yells began to send arrows up toward the Zephyr.

But suddenly they desisted and seemed seized with a panic. Another monster snake, probably the mate of the first one, glided out of the reeds and made for them with great fury.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A NEW RIVER DISCOVERED.

THE Ybaris were panic stricken as the huge water snake appeared. They instantly started to paddle toward the shore.

The excitement on board the Zephyr was intense.

"Look at that!" cried Hooper, wildly. "I said that the Ybaris feared nothing, but I will retract that statement. They're afraid of that snake."

"You are right," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "And it looks certain that their fate is sealed."

"Dat am a suttin fac'," cried Pomp. "Jes' yo' look at dat fo' a hoss race."

"Begorra, the snake is up fer to win," cried Barney. "Whurro! Wud yez look at that?"

Several of the Ybaris had risen and thrown their javelins at the water snake. Several of them took effect, and remained sticking in the snake's body.

But this did not, by any means, check the progress of the huge reptile.

Indeed, it came on all the faster, and swooped down upon the war canoe like a thunder-bolt.

With a sweep of its powerful body it upset the canoe. The natives were all thrown into the water.

Then the snake's huge folds encircled the canoe and crushed it as if it was made of tin-der. The frantic natives tried to swim, but one by one the reptile struck them with its powerful jaws, sending them under the water to drown.

In a few moments the snake had disposed of two-thirds of its foes. The others had succeeded in swimming ashore.

Those who reached the shore did not tarry for long in the vicinity. They sought refuge in the depths of the forest.

The contest had been viewed with interest from the decks of the air-ship by our adventurers.

Frank did not make a move to save the Ybaris, for, from Sam Hooper's assertion, they

were all deadly foes, and this was a fitting end for them.

But the snake now had the best of the situation and was beating the waters to foam when Barney cried:

"Bad luck to the reptile, Misther Frank. Wud yez give it a taste of the electhric bombs, sor?"

"All right!" cried Frank. "Fetch one from the cabin, Barney."

"Ay, ay, sor."

But at this moment a cry burst from the lips of Pomp.

"Golly, Marse Frank, no need ob dat. Jes' look at dat fo' fun."

"Hold on, Frank!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "Let's see the fun."

From the dense weeds, attracted by the racket, several powerful alligators had swam forth.

They were making directly for the spot where was the snake. Evidently they had scented the blood of the victims of the melee.

It was certain that they meant to attack the snake. Ordinarily the reptile would probably have had little trouble in getting away from his more unwieldy assailants.

But the javelins thrust into his body were just beginning to give it pain, and the snake was writhing in an attempt to dislodge them.

So that it did not perceive the approach of the saurians until one of them had a grip with his huge jaws upon the snake's tail.

Then there followed a circus. The anaconda coiled about in the water and struck at the alligator. But its jaws made little impression upon the tough hide of the saurian.

Another alligator attacked the snake, and the anaconda, freeing its tail, threw its mighty coils about its body.

The alligator was fairly lifted out of the water and the pressure of the snake's coils was so tremendous that the cracking and rending of the bones and flesh could be heard plainly aboard the air-ship.

"Golly!" cried Pomp, excitedly, "dat am a gone alligator sho's you'se born."

The ducky was right. Released from the snake's grip the next moment the saurian floated away belly upwards on the water.

But another alligator's jaws had closed upon the anaconda. This time it was nearer the snake's middle and the huge jaws crashed through muscle and flesh and spinal column.

The anaconda made a spasmodic attempt to free itself, then, overcome by the severing of the backbone, it thrashed helplessly about in the water.

The duel was over. The alligators had come off victorious at the cost of one of their number. A moment more and the big snake was being rendered in pieces by the voracious saurians.

Those on board the air-ship had watched the affair with deepest interest. It had indeed been a thrilling sight.

Sam Hooper, the Brazilian traveler, had already begun to make notes of the affair for reproduction in the book which he had intended writing when his South American travels should be at an end.

"Mr. Reade!" he exclaimed, gripping Frank's hands, "I cannot thank you enough for your kind service to me, and your offer to assist me in locating that tributary of the Amazon, the search for which I have so long pursued."

"Do not mention it, sir," said Frank, warmly. "I am glad to assist you."

Then Hooper and Dr. Vaneyke entered into an engrossing discussion of scientific matters,

and so deeply absorbed did they become as to become wholly oblivious of all about them.

Meanwhile, the air-ship rose to the height of several thousand feet.

From this altitude a mighty panorama was revealed. There was a wide-spreading scene of jungle, forest, swamp and river, and far to the northward could be seen the mighty range of the Andes, where the king of rivers had its source.

Frank with his glass began to study the face of the country below. The air-ship, by his direction, followed the course of the big river slowly.

Finally Frank saw the intricate delta of a respectable sized river running from the west, and emptying into the Amazon. He saw that the delta in many places seemed to run underground, and be hidden by dense undergrowth, so that its mouth would have been difficult to find by any one on the Amazon in boats.

At once the young inventor concluded that this was the river which Sam Hooper was in quest of, so he turned and shouted to the Brazilian traveler:

"One moment, Mr. Hooper. I believe I have found your river."

At once the explorer was aroused.

"Pardon me, Dr. Vaneyke!" he exclaimed, and hurriedly left the scientist. But both rushed to the rail.

Hooper fairly leaped in the air with joy.

"That is it!" he cried. "What a report to make to the American Geographical Society! At last I have made fame."

Then, as if having forgotten himself, he turned to Frank:

"But to you by right belongs the discovery," he cried. "Yours is the name."

"No," replied Frank, quickly. "Not so. I should not have known this river from any other but for you."

"And yet but for your air-ship I might not have been able to discover it," cried Hooper.

"Just the same, the honor is something I do not seek," declared Frank, firmly. "It is yours and you shall claim it."

"You are generous."

"No, I simply give you what is yours by right," replied Frank, with magnanimity. "The river is yours, and I would ask only the favor of naming it."

"You shall have that!" cried Hooper, trembling with eagerness and joy. "What name shall appear on the maps?"

"Well," said Frank, slowly, "I do not think I need be long in deciding. Suppose we call it the 'Hooper river,' tributary to the mighty Amazon?"

"Good!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, joyfully. "Let me congratulate you, Mr. Hooper, upon the certainty of your name descending to posterity."

The Brazilian explorer seemed very much overcome. He shook hands with all in silence and with much fervor.

"Now that we have named the river," said Frank, anticipating Hooper's desire, "let us explore it a little ways."

This pleased both Hooper and Dr. Vaneyke immensely. The big air-ship was lowered and began to follow the course of the river.

Over vast jungles infested with reptiles of enormous size and all species the Zephyr passed.

Soon the air-ship was over the sluggish current of the river.

Hooper was busy making notes of the scenes about. For some way the Zephyr followed the windings of the river.

Once they had occasion to pass near the

shore. A high rock capped with heavy vines overhung the river.

Suddenly from the cover of these vines a flight of arrows shot up into the air.

Barney had been standing at the rail on that side. The Celt had been oblivious of any impending peril.

But one of the arrows struck him full in the shoulder and he went to the deck like a log.

CHAPTER XLIV.

POMP GETS SQUARE WITH BARNEY.

The shock had taken Barney completely off his feet. He fell full length upon the deck.

A loud cry of terror and dismay had went up from Pomp, and he rushed to the side of his compatriot.

"Massy sakes, but he am killed fo' suah!" he wailed. "Oh, Marse Frank, cum yer quick, fo' de po' chile am done killed."

"Arrah, an' that's not so, naygur," expostulated Barney, trying to arise to a sitting posture. "Shure the bloody thing is only stinging the loife out av me shoulder."

"My soul! Barney is struck with an arrow!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "Quick, Frank!"

But Frank Reade, Jr., needed no urging. He at once rushed to Barney's side.

He quickly saw and understood the nature of the wound. The first thing to be done of course was to extricate the arrow.

At once he drew a sharp clasp knife and began to cut away at Barney's shirt. In a few seconds he had bared the wound.

To his relief he found that the arrow had not penetrated beyond the barb and the wound was not a deep one. The barb had caught in Barney's clothing, and this held the arrow and kept it from falling out.

The Celt experienced great relief the moment the arrow was drawn from the wound.

"Begorra, the murtherin' thing did hurt loike the divil!" he muttered. "But I'm all roight now. Bad luck to the omadhouns, give thim a volley!"

Barney would not even wait to have the wound dressed, but sprang for his rifle. When the explorers reached the rail, however, nothing could be seen of the natives.

"I am confident they are part of the Ybari tribe," declared Hooper. "The color of the feathers on the arrow is yellow, which is the color used by the Ybaris."

"Golly, dey am jes' hidin' in a good place!" declared Pomp.

"I think the arrows came from that clump of palms just back of the big rock!" cried Dr. Vaneyke.

"Begorra, I agree wid yez, docthor!" declared Barney.

"All right," said Frank, grimly. "We'll soon find out."

He stepped into the cabin and brought out a couple of electric bombs.

One of these he poised above his head and then flung it full force down into the palm clump.

For an instant the bomb vanished through the foliage, then there was a tremendous roar and a mighty upheaval of vines, trees and earth.

Vast numbers of the palms were torn up by the roots and hurled broadcast. Up into the air came the bodies of a score of natives, man-gled and torn.

A small clearing had literally been torn out of the bosom of that vast tangled forest.

The debris settled, and then through the woods beyond there could be seen scores of the natives running wildly from the spot.

"I guess they have got enough of the air-ship this time," cried Hooper, as he viewed the deadly work of the bomb with wonderment.

But the Zephyr was hot upon the trail of the savage natives.

Once again Frank threw a bomb with even more deadly result than before. A literal pathway was mowed through the forest.

"Do you think that is sufficient punishment for the Ybaris, Mr. Hooper?" asked the young inventor.

"I think it is a fearful lesson for them, Mr. Reade," declared Hooper, confidently. "I don't believe they will want to attack white men again."

"Then we will pursue them no further," said Frank. "Continue up the river, Pomp. When you come to a good landing place, let us halt and make a camp for the night."

There was need of this for darkness was coming on.

It was a darkness also of a sort to be dreaded. It was a moonless night, in fact starless also, as heavy clouds obscured the heavens from horizon to zenith.

Frank was desirous of further exploring the river on the morrow. If he did not make a stop or landing, the air-ship might drift a good ways from the spot.

So as the Zephyr made her way up the river, Frank and Pomp kept a good lookout for a landing place.

Suddenly the famous inventor cried:

"There is a good place, Pomp. Keep over to the left bank."

Pomp did as he was ordered. There was a long promontory clear of trees and shrubbery, which jutted out into the river.

It seemed like high and dry land, and a good place to stop. At once the air-ship descended and rested upon the promontory.

There was no sign of natives or wild beasts about, and there seemed little need of fearing a hostile attack.

A few alligators were in the river, and some huge turtles, but these could do no harm. Pomp went at once to work to get supper, and soon all were partaking of a savory meal.

The twilight on that Brazilian river was something gorgeous. The clouds on the western horizon broke just enough to allow the crimson rays of the dying sun to reflect upon water and forest.

This brilliant glare with the dark curtain of clouds overhead to concentrate its force was something beyond description.

All watched it with interest. But soon the sun settled beyond the horizon line, dark lines shot up into the sky, and the grand illumination was over.

Dusk was at hand and the day was at an end.

Barney and Pomp were in good spirits. The darky had been engaged that day in planning retaliation upon Barney for the last joke played upon him.

Pomp's fertile brain had been busily at work, and he had hit upon what he believed to be a dandy scheme.

At a favorable moment he had slipped down to Barney's state-room and abstracted a pair of corduroy pantaloons which the Celt took pride in and which he was wont to dress up in every evening.

Pomp procured some small but keen-edged carpet tacks and perforated a small piece of leather thickly with them.

These he left protruding from one side of the leather, and then proceeded to sew the leather to the inner part of the seat of the corduroy pantaloons.

This done, he returned the pantaloons to their place.

Just after the gorgeous sunset Pomp sat out upon deck enjoying a fine cigar. He was waiting for fun.

His eyes twinkled as he suddenly saw Barney come out of the cabin, and the Celt was arrayed in the corduroy pantaloons.

He had put them on without discovering the foreign element in their seat. Nothing could have worked better.

Pomp could hardly restrain himself as Barney came along lighting his dureen, and said, very pleasantly:

"The top av the avenin' to yez, naygur. It's a foine avenin'."

"Dat's a fac', sah," said Pomp, respectfully. "Won' yo' sit down awhile?"

"Bejabers, I think I will that, as yez are so koin'd as to ax me. It's not often yez have the golden opperchunity av sittin' beside av a rale gentleman an' a descindent av the Borus what owned the harp which ordet hung in Tara's halls. Do yez—whurroo! Divils an' 'ounds! Phwat iver was that?"

Barney had essayed to sit down upon the bench beside Pomp. The next moment he experienced an electric thrill the whole length of his spine.

Up he leaped and clapped his hands to his rear.

"Shure, it's sthung I am!" he howled. "Bejabers, phwy didn't yez tell me it was a hornet, yez black-faced ape? Begorra, I believe it was no hornet, but a shnake, bad luck to the devil av a reptile!"

Pomp bent himself double and stuffed one fist in his mouth to keep from betraying his mirth.

With quick wit, he essayed to brush something off the seat, saying, in surprise:

"Golly! somebody jes' lef a tack on dat seat, I'ish. Neber yo' min', but jes' sit right down agin."

Not suspecting anything, Barney prepared to comply.

"Shure, its an onmannerly thrick to lave tacks in a seat," he growled. "Ouch! tare an' 'ounds! Murder an'—whurroo! It's kilt I am!"

Then the Celt whirled and made a whack at Pomp.

"Shure, it's desavin' me ye've been," he roared. "Begorra, I'll tache yez to put bent pins in me chair an' axe me to sit down on thim. Shure, I'll pound the face off yez fer that."

But Pomp, now roaring with laughter, dodged and retreated in hot haste. A wild race followed around the deck, but the light-footed darky easily kept out of the way.

Barney finally gave it up and went storming into the cabin. Frank Reade, Jr., sat at a table and said, sharply:

"Barney, sit down here a moment and explain your figures on this chart. I can't make head nor tail of them."

The Celt was instantly all attention. He quickly dropped into the chair. The result was most terrific.

CHAPTER XLV.

FIGHTING IN THE DARK.

THE moment Barney touched the chair, he was up again with a yell which would have waked the dead.

Over went the table, the pile of charts, and an ink well made things very lovely indeed. Frank Reade, Jr., sat aghast, and saw Barney go dancing around the cabin like a wild Arah-pahoe.

"Begorra, it's kilt I am. Tare an' 'ounds! if

I could get me hands upon that naygur, shure I'd have the loife av him!"

"What in the world ails you?" thundered Frank. "What's the matter with you?"

"Shure, that naygur has been putting bent pins in all av the chairs," replied Barney, with a wail. "Shure, it's three toimes I've sat down on thim."

"You are crazy!" exclaimed Frank. "There are no pins in this chair."

Barney approached the chair ruefully, and to his surprise saw that Frank was right.

"Bejabers, that's funny," he muttered. "Shure, something was in that chair. Maybe it has fallen out."

"Perhaps so," said Frank, impatiently. "Come, show me about those figures. What is that?"

"Shure, sor, that reads, 'an island, latitude 18 degrees, 2 minutes; longitude 20 degrees.' Whurroo!"

Once again Barney had ventured to sit in the chair. This time he leaped nearly to the cabin ceiling and flew out of the cabin like a thunderbolt.

Frank was left in amazement at the Celt's peculiar conduct. But he had got an explanation of the figures on the chart and this was all he wanted.

"Very likely a bee has stung the fool," he muttered, testily, "or perhaps it's one of Pomp's pranks."

Barney, half insane with terror, rushed out on the air-ship's deck.

"Howly murther!" he screamed. "Help, help! Shure, it's a big tarantler in me clothes, biting the loife out av me! Shure, it's a dead man I'll soon be!"

"Hold still, Micky!" cried Sam Hooper, rushing up to him. "What's the matter with ye? Got the jim-jams?"

"Divil a bit!" retorted Barney, in anguished tones. "Shure, it's a tarantler has bit me!"

"A tarantula!" gasped Hooper. "Are you sure of that?"

"Yis."

"Where are you bitten?"

Barney clapped his hand to the affected part and danced about like a dervish. But at that moment he caught sight of Pomp behind the cabin door, stuffing his fists in his mouth to prevent actual collapse from paroxysms of laughter.

Like a flash it dawned upon Barney that he had been made the victim of a practical joke.

At the same moment his hands came in contact with the piece of leather in the seat of his pantaloons, and he saw through the trick.

Without a word he bolted for his state-room.

Very quickly he removed his pantaloons and extracted the torture machine.

When he re-appeared on deck he was a most solemn appearing Irishman. He fought shy of Pomp, and was much downcast. The darky had certainly squared accounts with him in a masterly fashion.

Dr. Vaneyke and Sam Hooper stood near the cabin door talking, when a startling thing occurred.

There was a swishing, swashing sound in the air, and then several thuds behind them.

Both turned to see half a dozen arrows sticking from the woodwork, having narrowly missed them. The arrows had come from the dense gloom and the direction of the river.

The effect upon the two scientists can well be imagined.

"Heavens!" gasped Dr. Vaneyke. "That was a close call, Hooper."

"I should say so."

"We had better get out of the way."

"You are right."

Both men dodged into the cabin. Frank Reade, Jr., was just coming out and met them.

The famous inventor at once comprehended the situation.

"Well," he ejaculated, "we are not safe from the foe here it seems. Let us see what they look like."

Frank rushed through a passage leading to the pilot-house from the cabin. Here he sprang up the steps to the flash light and sent its rays across the river.

"That was certainly a very narrow escape," declared Frank Reade, Jr., as he examined the spot. "None of these arrows went very wide of the mark."

"Indeed, we are fortunate," rejoined Hooper.

"I would not care to take the chances again."

"We have good reason to be thankful," asserted Dr. Vaneyke.

"Golly! I jus' fink dem rapscallions got de worstest ob it," declared Pomp.

"I think they will keep a respectful distance for the rest of the night," said Frank.

"Then you don't think it will be necessary

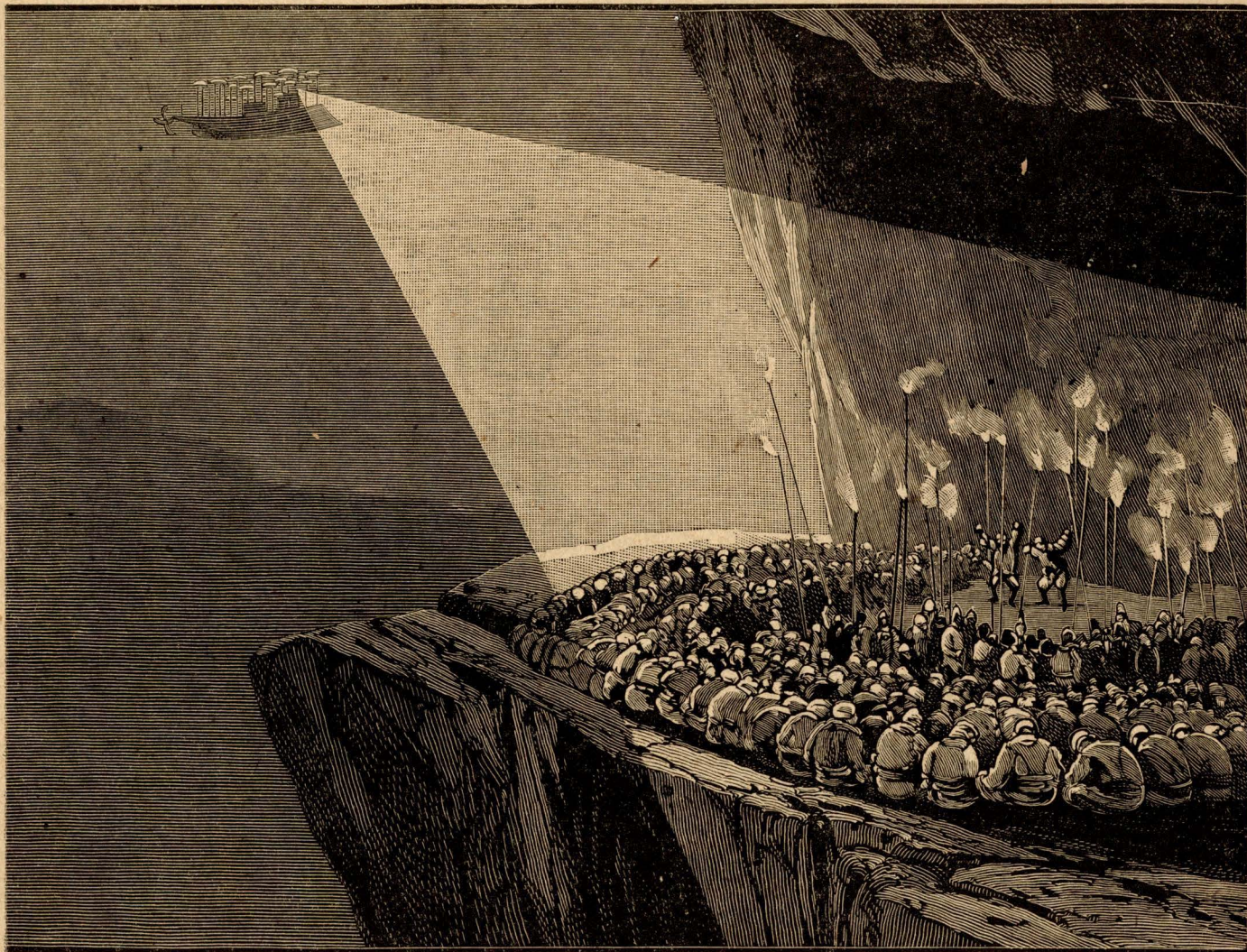
mounted high into the air. In a moment the vicinity was illumined like day.

It was a cleverly constructed fire raft, and the natives, with more of sagacity than one would have given them credit for, had devised it and sent it down the stream to destroy the air-ship.

Then suddenly the opposite bank of the river became alive with dancing and yelling savages.

"By Jupiter!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr., "they evidently mean business, don't they?"

"Mr. Reade," said Sam Hooper, in something



Upon a shelf of the mountain wall and directly before the mouth of an enormous cavern a large body of men were gathered. All were sitting down in semi-circles with bowed heads before a number of tall poles in the hands of other fantastically dressed natives.

The water and the opposite bank showed up as plain as day. The river surface was clear, but upon the river bank were a group of natives.

Dr. Vaneyke and Hooper had been revealed plainly in the glare of the cabin light and they were a good target for the arrows of the foe.

As the search-light was turned upon them with such a sharp glare, the natives were alarmed and fled into the underbrush.

But Barney and Pomp appeared on deck with repeaters and began to fire into the shrubbery on the other side.

The bullets were answered by a few arrows, but these did not do any harm.

In a few moments it was safe enough to assume that the natives had been dispersed.

All were on deck now and examining the arrows imbedded in the side of the cabin.

for us to change our location to-night?" asked Dr. Vaneyke.

"By no means," replied Frank. "We will stick right here for the present."

"But had we not better have a good guard set?"

"Certainly."

At this moment an idea occurred to Frank. He sprang into the electric light tower and sent the rays of the search-light down the river.

The result was startling.

There, plainly visible upon the river's surface, was a boat containing full half a score of the hostile natives.

In the other direction was a large raft, heaped high with some material. Suddenly, into the air there sprang a bright light.

A mighty blaze leaped up from the raft and

like alarm, "don't you think we had better get out of this?"

Frank was grimly silent a moment.

He watched the fire raft a moment. It was certain to drift down upon the sand bar and would surely remain there and destroy the air-ship.

Frank knew that with a few electric bombs he might destroy the whole band of natives, but he did not wish to commit such wholesale slaughter.

So he said, briefly:

"We will move to safer quarters."

Barney heard the words and sprang to the pilot-house. He placed his hand upon lever No. 11.

To his horror it would not work. In vain he tried to turn it. Frank shouted to him to

hasten, but the agonized Celt was wholly unable to do so.

In horror and despair he shouted:

"Shure, Misther Frank, the lever won't work. Wud yez thry it yesilf?"

Every moment the fire-raft was drawing nearer. It seemed a certainty that the Zephyr was lost. If the flames reached it the air-ship would be consumed!

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TWO TIGERS.

It was with mingled emotions of fear and horror that the voyagers of the Zephyr saw the fire-raft approaching them, and realized that the air-ship was unable to move.

In vain Barney had tried to work Lever No. 11. It remained obdurate.

The fire-raft every moment drew nearer, the intense flames displacing the dense darkness of the vicinity, and revealing more plainly the yelling hordes of natives upon the opposite bank of the Brazilian river.

Sam Hooper, the explorer, had followed Frank into the pilot-house.

"What is the matter, Barney?" asked Frank, sharply.

"Shure, I don't know, sor," replied the Celt, quickly. "The lever won't worruk."

At a glance Frank saw what was the trouble. The concussion spring had broken, and let the shoulder of the lever down into a slot which held it.

Frank quickly raised the armature, and with his hands pulled the bar, which opened the dynamos.

In a moment the air-ship sprang into space. Up it shot into the upper air and out of danger.

Then Barney sprang to the search-light and sent its rays down through the darkness to illumine the surface of the river.

There the fire raft was seen lodged upon the sand-bar and burning to the water's edge.

The Zephyr had escaped none too soon. A few moments further delay would have settled the fate of all.

"Golly! I jes' reckon we was jes' about in time," cried Pomp, excitedly. "Wha' yo' gwine do, Marse Frank? Can't yo' gib dem one ob de electric bombs?"

"No, I think not, Pomp," replied Frank. "It would be only a useless carnage and not help us. We have given the scamps a ticket of leave and are now safe. I think that is enough for now."

"You are right, Mr. Reade," agreed Sam Hooper. "Nothing would be gained by taking the lives of the wretches."

So the electric bomb was not thrown down among the natives to needlessly slaughter them. The air-ship hovered over the spot for a few moments and then sailed away into the night.

Frank stood by the pilot-house directing Barney how to steer, and keeping the search-light down upon the face of the country below.

It was certainly a narrow escape which they had experienced.

But Frank had no idea of keeping on all night in this fashion. Dr. Vaneyke now approached him.

"Don't you think we'll get off our course in this manner, Frank?" he asked.

"Of course," agreed the young inventor, "but what better can we do?"

"Well, that is a problem," admitted the scientist.

"As soon as possible," continued Frank.

"we will locate a good spot for a camp and descend again."

"Very good," rejoined Dr. Vaneyke, "this time I hope that we will not alight in the midst of a band of savages."

"I think we will not."

Barney kept the search-light busy. In the broad pathway of brilliant light many curious sights were beheld.

A forest was passed over, the trees of which were filled with chattering monkeys.

Wild animals of prey were seen to slink away in the gloom as if afraid of the electric glare. But all was not animal life. Villages of natives were passed over.

In many cases the brilliant light brought the natives from their huts in a swarm and greatly excited them.

They danced and leaped and yelled like veritable fiends. In some cases flaming arrows were discharged into the air.

But none of these, fortunately, came near the air-ship. The voyagers leaned over the rail and watched the scene curiously.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Hooper in dismay, "It don't look as if we were going to have much of a chance to camp to-night."

"That's a fact," agreed Dr. Vaneyke.

"This region seems to be pretty well inhabited."

"But the region can't be all like this," said Frank. "We will soon find a change."

And this prediction proved correct.

After a time the native habitations were passed, and then there came a lonely, barren tract.

Suddenly Frank cried:

"Hold up, Barney!"

The Celt instantly complied. The air-ship was brought to a stop over a small dell beneath rolling hills.

The search-light was assiduously put to work and every inch of the place was scrutinized.

It was a level tract of ground a few acres in extent, and hemmed in with tall trees.

A small brook ran through the tract. Altogether it looked like a safe and desirable place to halt.

Accordingly Frank said:

"Now, Barney, lower the ship. We will stop here."

Down the Zephyr settled.

In a few moments it rested upon the ground in the very verge of the forest. Preparations were at once made for leaving the air-ship's deck.

But before a move could be made to effect this end, a startling thing happened.

Suddenly a hoarse roar sounded in the black depths of the forest. A cry of alarm escaped Frank Reade, Jr.'s lips.

"Quick, friends, for your lives!" he shouted. "To the cabin."

Sam Hooper and Pomp succeeded in reaching the cabin door, but Dr. Vaneyke did not. Barney was in the pilot-house, and Frank stood by it.

Out of the gloom there shot two gigantic forms and alighted on the deck of the air-ship directly in front of Dr. Vaneyke.

Two powerful and tawny tigers they were, with glaring eyeballs, glistening white teeth and lashing tails.

Pen cannot adequately depict the situation at that moment. Petrified with horror and utterly unable to move hand or foot the aged scientist stood.

The two huge beasts crouched there not ten feet from the terrified man.

For once in his life Frank Reade, Jr., was

totally at a loss what to do. He stood like one dumfounded.

For what seemed an age the tigers crouched there, snarling and lashing their tails. Vaneyke stood looking at them with a kind of peculiar fascination.

"Golly!" screamed Pomp. "Whar am yo' rifle, Marse Frank? Dey's done suah fo' to jump at Marse Vaneyke."

"My God!" groaned Frank, with awful horror. "What shall I do?"

"The man is lost!" shrieked Hooper.

But Barney was the coolest of all. The Celt cautiously crept out of the pilot-house, and said:

"Whist now, friends, an' I'll tell yez phwat —"

He never finished the sentence. With a mighty roar one of the tigers leaped at Dr. Vaneyke.

By the greatest of good luck the scientist kept his head. He instantly dropped as the tiger sprang.

As a result the big brute went clean over him and struck the deck with a terrific concussion. The second tiger did not move.

Dr. Vaneyke was almost instantly upon his feet.

A little excited he now tried to reach the cabin door. But he had not taken a step when the second tiger leaped.

But the scientist's fellow voyagers were now roused to action.

Barney had snatched his rifle from the pilot-house. Instantly he had fired at the tiger.

The shot took effect.

But the luckiest chance in the world it struck the tiger just back of the fore arm. The bullet penetrated to the heart.

The huge beast's form struck Dr. Vaneyke full force.

The doctor went down like a crushed reed, and the tiger lay across him. But the big brute could do no harm for he was dead.

The bullet had killed him instantly. The other tiger picked himself up, and with a thundrous growl cleared the rail and disappeared in the gloom.

A volley of rifle balls followed him. Whether they took effect or not was never known.

It was but a few moments' work to pull the tiger's body from the doctor's prostrate form.

"Shure, it's worth two dead min yez are now, doctor," cried Barney, exuberantly, "but faith, I wouldn't have given much for yez one time."

"I owe my life to you, my brave man," cried the doctor, gratefully. "I shall never forget it."

"Shure, sor, don't yez ever thrubble about that," rejoined Barney with a flourish of his hands.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A GOLD HUNT.

It was truly a close call for the popular scientist. Congratulations were warmly in order.

Then camp was made for the night upon the spot. No further trouble was apprehended, nor was it experienced that night.

Barney was deputized to watch the first half of the night. With this arrangement, the others turned in.

Morning came in due time, and, much refreshed, all were soon astir.

"Well, Mr. Reade," said Sam Hooper, approaching Frank after breakfast, "I think I shall take leave of you this morning."

"What!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise. "Do you mean that?"

"I do."

"But—what are your plans?"

"Simple enough. By your kindness and co-operation, I have been able to locate and name Hooper river. But my work is not yet done in this region."

"Indeed!"

"I have yet to accomplish certain other ends before I leave Brazil."

"So that is your decision?"

"It is."

"Remember you are perfectly free to journey on the air-ship as far as you will."

"I thank you for your great kindness. I would enjoy returning to America with you. But I have other work to perform."

"You know best. Where will you leave us?"

"Right here!"

"What?" exclaimed Frank, in sheer amazement.

"That is right," replied Hooper, with a smile.

"But—but what do you know of this region about here? You will get lost and fall a victim to wild beasts."

"I am not a bit afraid of it."

"You are not?"

"No. I know every mile of this region. I shall strike into the west from here. In two days I will be with friendly natives."

Frank was much interested.

"When will you return to electrify the world with your discoveries?" he asked.

"Possibly in three years. I shall then call upon you in Readestown."

"I shall be glad to see you."

"Thank you."

With this, Hooper hastened away to prepare himself for the departure. In a short while he was shaking hands in farewell with all.

"You need not worry about me now," he declared. "I am at home in this region. I shall see you in America."

Then he turned into the deep forest. Quickly his form was lost to view.

Dr. Vaneyke drew a deep breath.

"Well!" he exclaimed, forcibly, "I hope certainly that he will succeed. I liked him very much."

"Amen!" said Frank.

"Bejabers, he was a foine gintleman," said Barney.

"Golly, dat's a suttin' fac!" put in Pomp.

But none of the party ever saw Hooper again. What was the fate of the South American traveler was never known.

A short while later the air-ship was on its northward flight. Swift as a bird of prey, it crossed the line of Brazil and hovered over the Guianas.

Frank now began to reckon the requisite length of time in which to reach home.

"We can flatter ourselves upon one score," he said, in an elated tone. "We have accomplished a marvelous journey. From north to south around the globe is a feat which few can equal."

"Begorra, yez are roight, Misther Frank!" cried Barney, with enthusiasm. "Frank Reade, Jr., is shure to be at the head."

Being so near the equator the heat was most intense.

Awnings were spread upon the air-ship's deck, and all proceeded to take it easy and enjoy themselves.

This consisted much in studying the rich panorama of country far below.

The diversity of scenery was very great.

Mountain ranges of enormous height were crossed.

These were bald and craggy, as a rule. The slopes were wooded, and the plains and valleys were like vast jungles with the density of undergrowth.

Stagnant lakes and pools of water were frequent.

The rivers were shallow, which led Dr. Vaneyke to remark:

"This is the main difficulty with the Guianas. Water is scarce and of a poor quality, and jungle fevers abound."

"I suppose there are some of the richest mines in the world in these mountains," said Frank.

"You are right," agreed the scientist. "I have heard it said that the rivers are rich with nuggets and dust of gold."

"Golly sakes!" cried Pomp, with wide open eyes. "I jes' fink dis chile would like a try at dat fink."

"Bejabers, so do I," put in Barney. "Shure I wudn't moind carrying home a nugget or two. I cud make good use av it."

Dr. Vaneyke and Frank exchanged glances.

"Really," said the scientist. "It would suit me to explore here a little, for I would like much to add to my mineralogical collection."

"Done!" cried Frank, with inspiration. "Pick out a good locality and we will descend at once."

The voyagers were all dressed in suits of light material with regular jungle caps of lightest cork and linen.

The air-ship was suffered to descend into a deep ravine which was hemmed in with high hills.

A rushing stream ran down over a gravelly bed. Upon a level spot the Zephyr was allowed to rest and then the explorers proceeded to indulge in their search for gold.

Dr. Vaneyke first made an analysis of the soil and a study of the sub-strata. His face was aglow as he declared:

"The deposit here is of that auriferous kind in which not only gold, but diamonds are frequently found. I think our quest will not be unrewarded."

A cheer went up from the others with this announcement.

At once all went into the quest with rare inspiration. With mining pan and washer, Barney and Pomp began to work upon the sands of the creek.

But Dr. Vaneyke was the first one to discover anything of value.

Suddenly his eye caught something glittering in the creek's waters.

With a sharp cry he picked it up and held it up to the light.

"Look, look!" he cried,

It was a lump of gold.

It was certainly a beautiful nugget worth fully a thousand dollars. The others crowded about to see it.

"Golly! am't dat a dandy?" cried Pomp. "But dis chile am gwine fo' to' fin' de nex' one."

"Bejabers, I've a finger in that pie meself," cried Barney.

"Sho! yo' am no 'count; I'ish."

"Begorra, I'll show yez. If yez say anythin' more av that koid to me I'll spile the mug av yez!"

"Huh! yo' ain' able!"

"I ain't, eh? Bejabers, that's a challenge, an' as I'm a man av honor I'll accept it."

"I don't keer what yo' do, I'ish. Jes' yo' keep away fom dis chile."

"Take that, yez misfit monkey!"

Barney gave Pomp a whack across the back. The ducky was at the moment upon the very verge of the banking, and he went down into the water like a bullet.

An eddy here made a deep pool, and he vanished beneath the surface of the water.

But he came up like a cork and scrambled ashore. Up the bank he came, dripping wet and mad.

"Golly! yo' ain't gwine to git off fo' dat, I'ish!" he yelled. "I'll jes' gib yo' one good thrashin' fo' dat."

Barney on the bank was convulsed with laughter. He dodged and ran to the foot of the precipice near.

Pomp reached down and tried to pick up what looked like a blackened bit of wood to throw after him.

But the ducky's fingers closed over a hard substance, when he essayed to lift it he found it too heavy to throw that distance.

Astonished, he glanced down at it, and then he detected a sparkling light on the under side.

A sharp cry escaped his lips.

"Golly! golly! golly!" he roared. "I'se jes' done beat de hull ob yo' people. I'se jes' foun' de bigges' nugget yet."

Instantly, Barney was sobered, and Frank and the doctor came rushing up.

"My goodness, but it is a handsome one," cried the doctor.

"Golly!" exploded Pomp. "I done fought it an' ole black bit ob burned wood."

"That is owing to the fact that time and the atmosphere has covered the nugget with an auriferous deposit of dirt," declared Dr. Vaneyke. "But you are a lucky man, Pomp. There's fully two thousand dollars worth of gold in that bit of blackness."

Pomp was so elated that he turned a hand-spring and stood on his head.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OVER THE GULF—HOME AGAIN.

BARNEY was speechless, and stood making grimaces at Pomp all the while. This only made the ducky the more jubilant.

"Huh!" he cried. "I tole yo' yo' was a no-'count Mick. Jes' yo' beat dat if yo' fink yo' can."

"Begorra, I will that, or I'll niver see Ameriky agin," declared Barney. "Yez needn't feel so inflated, naygur. Mebbe it's fool's gold, after all."

"Ho!" sniffed Pomp. "If it was yours it would be fo' suah!"

Several hours were spent in the gold hunt. Then Frank went aboard the Zephyr and rang the gong.

"All aboard!" he shouted. "We can spend no more time here."

It was found that several thousand dollars worth of gold had been found in the ravine during the brief search. Pomp's nugget was the largest.

Barney had hard luck, but he was none the less cheerful.

"Whurroo!" he cried, in a scoffing tone. "I don't care for the dirty stuff anyway; Barney O'Shea's no miser."

Pomp did not venture a reply to this insinuation.

He felt that fortune had favored him so well that he could afford to ignore anything so plainly indicative of envy.

The Zephyr once more left the earth and the journey was continued.

The next evening the waters of the Caribbean Sea burst upon their vision.

They were now rapidly nearing the safe completion of their remarkable journey.

The Zephyr floated in the blue ether with grace and ease. The atmosphere was balmy and pure. The spirits of all were at a high notch.

Pomp went below and brought up his banjo.

The ducky was in high feather, and with his inimitable style rendered a number of charming plantation songs.

The strains of "Uncle Ned," "Jim Crow," and "I'm G'wine Back to Dixie," dwelt in the rich atmosphere in charming cadence.

All listened with interest.

Barney, however, wore a cynical smile through all.

"Pomp, you're a genius!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "Surely those melodies are not equaled in any part of the world."

This riled Barney.

"Begorra, that's not thrue," he burst forth. "Shure ould Erin's the land av' song an' music. Shure phwat can beat 'Garry Owen' and the 'Harp of Tara.' Jist yez wait a moment an I'll show yez."

Down into the cabin the Celt went.

He reappeared in a few moments with a fiddle. It was one of the genuine Irish make, and had done service in Barney's skillful hands at many a wake and wedding.

All laughed as Barney appeared.

Pomp, with due deference ceased his work on the banjo.

"Now I'll show yez some music av' the classical order!" announced Barney, as he threw his fiddle bow aloft.

And surely the party were given a rare treat.

Barney got the fiddle into working order, and such original music certainly none there had every heard before.

Whether classical or not, it was certainly inimitable.

Backward and forward the Celt swayed, and the fiddle fairly creaked as the strains were drawn from it.

It has been said that an Irish fiddler can get more original melody out of a fiddle than any

other living person, and this was undoubtedly not without truth.

All the Irish airs in creation were evoked from Barney's fiddle.

When he finally wound up with a rollicking Irish song, even Pomp applauded.

"Dat am pretty good, I'ish," cried the ducky. "But I kain't agree wif yo' dat it am prettier dan Kitty Wells, or Way Down Upon de Swanee Ribber."

"Bejabbers, there's no music in the worruld to equal the Irish melodies," protested Barney.

"Oh, wait a moment," said Frank Reade, Jr. "Let us see what you think of this."

The young inventor owned a rich baritone voice of a highly cultivated and sweet order.

Heat once raised it, and without accompaniment at once began to sing "The Star Spangled Banner."

As the beautiful air, so richly given, floated out in wondrous cadence upon the evening air, all listened spell bound.

It was certainly a wonderful effort, and for a moment after Frank had concluded, tears of emotion stood in the eyes of all, as they sat thrilled with the force and melody of the inspiring song.

Then as with one impulse they swung their hats and cheered.

"Hurrah for Ameriky!" yelled Barney. "Shure it's the land av the free an' the home av the brave, an' to ivery Irishman it's as dear as the ould sod itself."

Thus the evening was pleasantly passed. The next day the Zephyr was high above the Gulf of Mexico.

Frank held his course over toward the isle of Cuba.

At Havana the whole city turned out at sight of the air-ship.

Guns were fired from Moro Castle, the Cuban fleet dipped their colors and the quays were thronged with people.

The arrival of the Zephyr had been anticipated, for the cable had carried the news all over the world, of the expedition from north to south around the globe.

[THE END.]

Frank did not think it advisable to land at Havana.

He sent down a parachute with complimentary regards to the governor-general and other dignitaries. This fell in the public square.

Then sailing out over the harbor, Frank proceeded to answer the salutes fired in a way which demonstrated the mighty power of the air-ship.

Dropping bombs into the water at intervals, he gave a marine display which was wonderful to witness.

Great columns of water rose to frightful height, and so rocked the shipping in the harbor that many of the craft seemed likely to upset.

Then Frank sailed away for Key West.

Some hours later the Keys were reached, and then the southern part of the Floridan Peninsula.

Steadily northward the Zephyr held its way. It was a sort of triumphal march, for in every city and town, great demonstrations were made.

But in vain were efforts made to induce Frank to descend.

He contented himself with a few salutes and kept on to Readstown. In due time the air-ship reached that town.

The Zephyr descended in the great yard of the Reade Works. A great ovation was given the returned voyagers.

All over the world the telegraph and cable flashed the news of the success of their wonderful trip from north to south around the globe.

Frank Reade, Jr., was overwhelmed with laudatory and congratulatory letters and telegrams. But he was weary with travel, and putting them all aside, sought a brief period of rest.

Dr. Vaneyke went back to the Smithsonian Institute in triumph, Barney and Pomp returned to their duties, and the Zephyr taken apart was stored away in sections.

And this, dear reader, brings us to the end of the tale.

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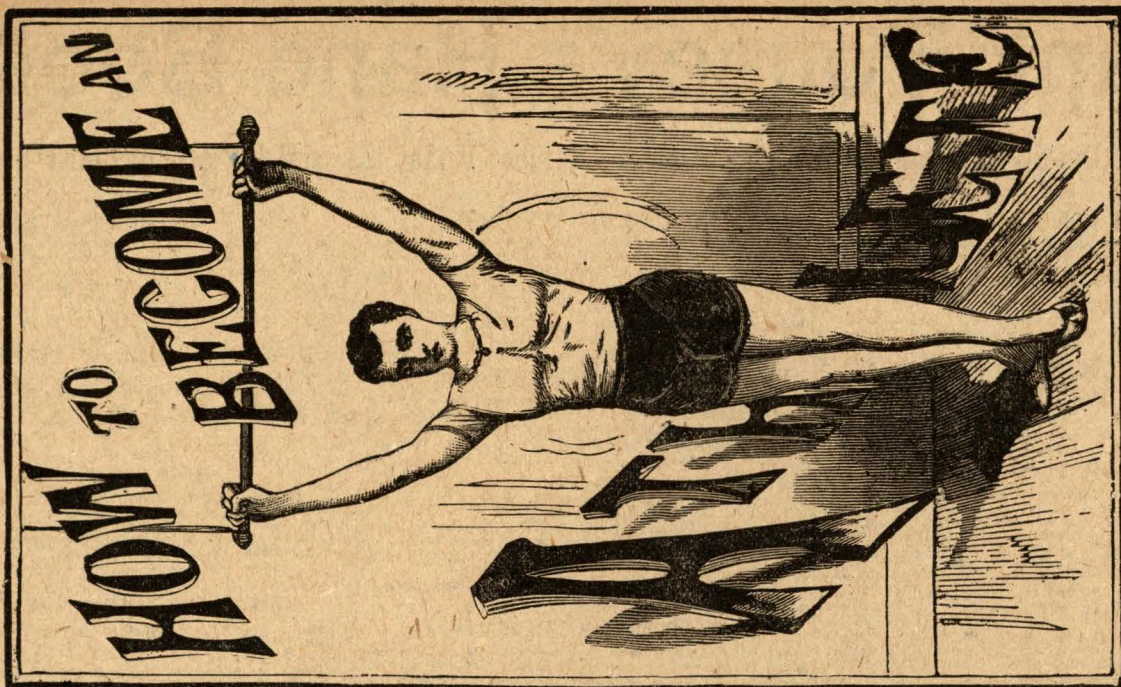
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